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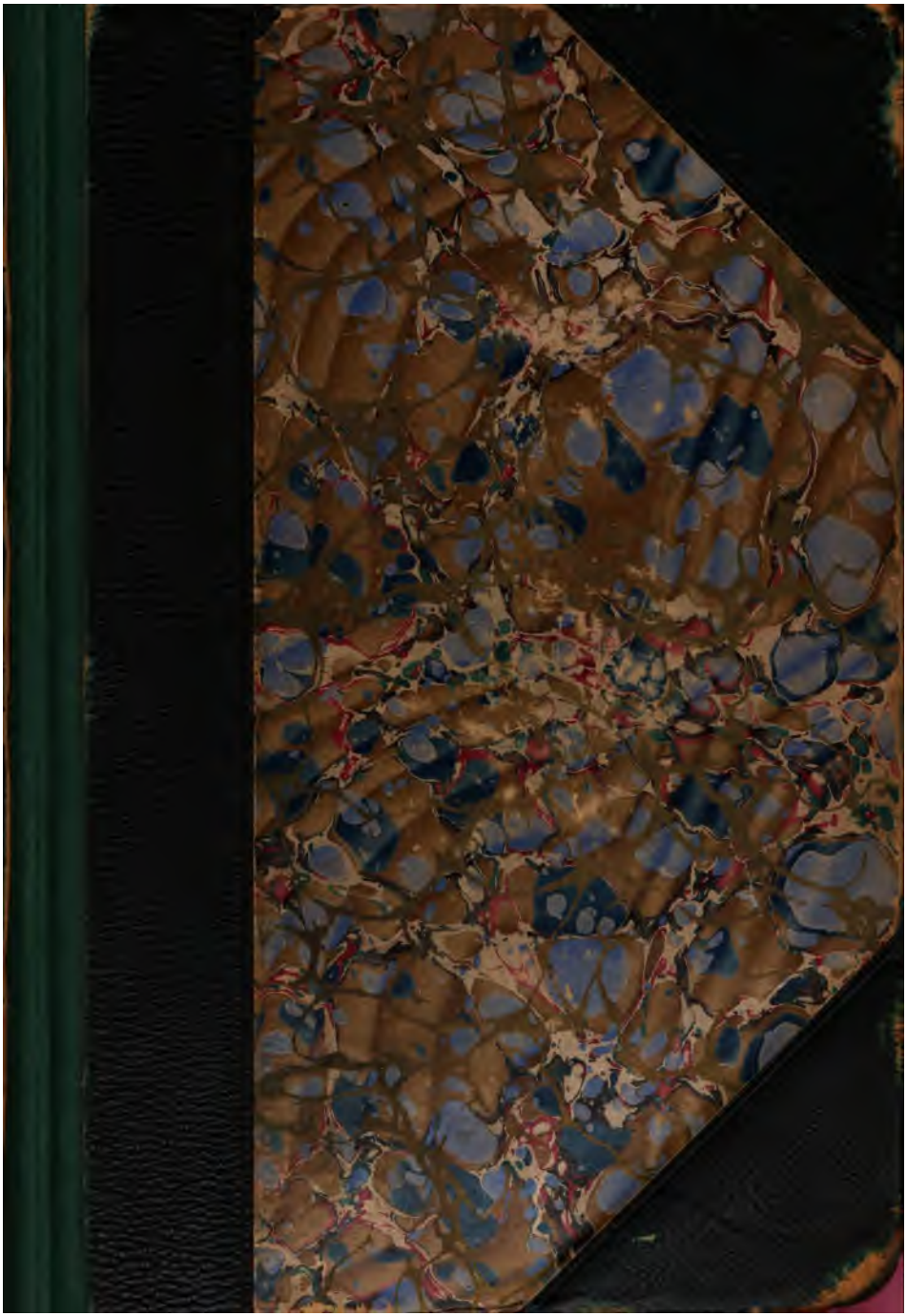

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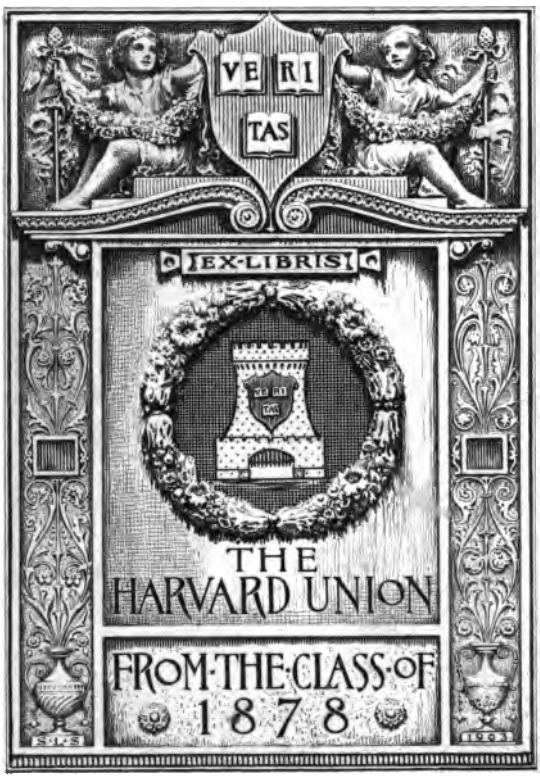

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THE WORKS

OF

HEINRICH HEINE

XII

THE WORKS

OF

HEINRICH HEINE

VOLUME XII

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1906

ROMANCERO

BOOK III.

LAST POEMS

TRANSLATED BY

MARGARET ARMOUR

AUTHOR OF "THE FALL OF THE NIBELUNGS," "SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH," "THE SHADOW OF LOVE," ETC.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF HEINE, 1850

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
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ROMANCERO.

ROMANCERO.

THIRD BOOK.

HEBREW MELODIES.

OH, let not life for ever go,
Its joy unyielded;
And let them shoot, nor fear the foe,
Be thou but shielded.

If wingëd Fortune pass thee by,
Catch hold and follow;
I warn thee, build thy hut not high,
Build in the hollow.

PRINCESS SABBATH.

IN Arabia's book of fable
We behold enchanted princes
Who at times their form recover,
Fair as first they were created.

The uncouth and shaggy monster
Has again a king for father:
Pipes his amorous ditties sweetly
On the flute in jewelled raiment.

Yet the respite from enchantment
Is but brief, and, without warning,
Lo! we see his Royal Highness
Shuffled back into a monster.

Of a prince by fate thus treated
Is my song. His name is Israel,
And a witch's spell has changed him
To the likeness of a dog.

As a dog, with dog's ideas,
All the week, a cur, he noses
Through life's filthy mire and sweepings,
Butt of mocking city Arabs;

But on every Friday evening,
On a sudden, in the twilight,
The enchantment weakens, ceases,
And the dog once more is human.

And his father's halls he enters
As a man, with man's emotions,
Head and heart alike uplifted,
Clad in pure and festal raiment.

"Be ye greeted, halls beloved,
Of my high and royal father!
Lo! I kiss your holy door-posts,
Tents of Jacob, with my mouth!"

Through the house there passes strangely
A mysterious stir and whisper,
And the hidden master's breathing
Shudders weirdly through the silence.

Silence! save for one, the steward
(*Vulgo*, synagogue attendant)
Springing up and down, and busy
With the lamps that he is lighting.

Golden lights of consolation,
How they sparkle, how they glimmer!
Proudly flame the candles also
On the rails of the Almemor.

By the shrine wherein the Thora
Is preserved, and which is curtained
By a costly silken hanging,
Whereon precious stones are gleaming.

There, beside the desk already
Stands the synagogue precentor,
Small and spruce, his mantle black
With an air coquettish shouldering;

And, to show how white his hand is,
At his neck he works—forefinger
Oddly pressed against his temple,
And the thumb against his throat.

To himself he trills and murmurs,
Till at last his voice he raises:
Till he sings with joy resounding,
"Lecho dodi likrath kallah!"

"Lecho dodi likrath kallah—
Come, beloved one, the bride
Waits already to uncover
To thine eyes her blushing face!"

The composer of this poem,
Of this pretty marriage song,
Is the famous minnesinger,
Don Jehuda ben Halevy.

It was writ by him in honour
Of the wedding of Prince Israel
And the gentle Princess Sabbath,
Whom they call the silent princess.

Pearl and flower of all beauty
Is the princess—not more lovely
Was the famous Queen of Sheba,
Bosom friend of Solomon,

Who, *bas bleu* of Ethiopia,
Sought by wit to shine and dazzle,
And became at length fatiguing
With her very clever riddles.

Princess Sabbath, rest incarnate,
Held in hearty detestation
Every form of witty warfare
And of intellectual combat.

She abhorred with equal loathing
Loud declamatory passion—
Pathos ranting round and storming
With dishevelled hair and streaming.

In her cap the silent princess
Hides her modest, braided tresses,
Like the meek gazelle she gazes,
Blooms as slender as the myrtle.

She denies her lover nothing
Save the smoking of tobacco;
"Dearest, smoking is forbidden,
For to-day it is the Sabbath.

"But at noon, as compensation,
There shall steam for thee a dish
That in very truth divine is—
Thou shalt eat to-day of schalet!

"Schalet, ray of light immortal!
Schalet, daughter of Elysium!"
So had Schiller's song resounded,
Had he ever tasted schalet.

For this schalet is the very
Food of heaven, which, on Sinai,
God Himself instructed Moses
In the secret of preparing,

At the time He also taught him
And revealed in flames of lightning
All the doctrines good and pious,
And the holy Ten Commandments.

Yes, this schalet's pure ambrosia
Of the true and only God:
Paradisal bread of rapture;
And, with such a food compared,

The ambrosia of the pagan,
False divinities of Greece,
Who were devils 'neath disguises,
Is the merest devils' offal.

When the prince enjoys the dainty,
Glow his eyes as if transfigured,
And his waistcoat he unbuttons;
Smiling blissfully he murmurs,

"Are not those the waves of Jordan
That I hear—the flowing fountains
In the palmy vale of Beth-el,
Where the camels lie at rest?

"Are not those the sheep-bells ringing
Of the fat and thriving wethers
That the shepherd drives at evening
Down Mount Gilead from the pastures?"

But the lovely day flits onward,
And with long, swift legs of shadow
Comes the evil hour of magic—
And the prince begins to sigh;

Seems to feel the icy fingers
Of a witch upon his heart;
Shudders, fearful of the canine
Metamorphosis that waits him.

Then the princess hands her golden
Box of spikenard to her lover,
Who inhales it, fain to revel
Once again in pleasant odours.

And the princess tastes and offers
Next the cup of parting also—
And he drinks in haste, till only
Drops a few are in the goblet.

These he sprinkles on the table,
Then he takes a little wax-light,
And he dips it in the moisture
Till it crackles and is quenched.

JEHUDA BEN HALEVY.

(FRAGMENT.)

I.

"If, Jerusalem, I ever
Should forget thee, to the roof
Of my mouth then cleave my tongue,
May my right hand lose its cunning—"

In my head the words and music
Round and round keep humming, ringing,
And I seem to hear men's voices,
Men's deep voices singing psalms—

And of long and shadowy beards
I can also catch some glimpses—
Say, which phantom dream-begotten
Is Jehuda ben Halevy?

But they swiftly rustle past me,
For the ghosts avoid, with terror,
Rude and clumsy human converse;
Yet, in spite of all, I knew him,

Yes, I knew him by his forehead
Pale and proud with noble thought,
By the eyes of steadfast sweetness:
Keen and sad they gazed in mine.

But more specially I knew him
By the enigmatic smiling
Of the lovely lips and rhythmic
That belong to poets only.

Years they come, and years they vanish;
Seven hundred years and fifty
It is now since dawned the birthday
Of Jehuda ben Halevy.

At Toledo in Castile
First he saw the light of heaven,
And the golden Tagus lulled him
In his cradle with its music.

The unfolding of his powers
Intellectual was fostered
By his father strict, who taught him
First the book of God, the Thora.

With his son he read the volume
In the ancient text, whose fair,
Picturesque and hieroglyphic,
Old-Chaldean, square-writ letters

From the childhood of our world
Have been handed down, and therefore
Seem familiarly to smile on
All with naïve, childlike natures.

And this ancient, uncorrupted
Text the boy recited also
In the Tropp—the sing-song measure,
From primeval times descended.

And the gutturals so oily,
And so fat he gurgled sweetly,
While he shook and trilled and quavered
The Schalscheleth like a bird.

And the boy was learned early
In the Targum Onkelos,
Which is written in low-Hebrew
In the Aramæan idiom,

Bearing somewhat the resemblance
To the language of the prophets
That the Swabian does to German—
In this curious bastard Hebrew,

As we said, the boy was versed,
And ere long he found such knowledge
Of most valuable service
In the study of the Talmud.

Yes, his father led him early
To the Talmud, and threw open
For his benefit that famous
School of fighting, the Halacha,

Where the athletes dialectic,
Best in Babylon, and also
Those renowned in Pumpeditha
Did their intellectual tilting.

He had here the chance of learning
Every art and ruse polemic;
How he mastered them was proven
In the book Cosari, later.

But the lights are twain, and differ,
That are shed on earth by heaven;
There's the harsh and glaring sunlight,
And the mild and gentle moonlight.

With a double radiance also
Shines the Talmud; the Halacha
Is the one, and the Hagada
Is the other light. The former

I have called the school of fighting;
But the latter, the Hagada
I will call a curious garden,
Most fantastic, and resembling

Much another one that blossomed
Too in Babylon—the garden
Of Semiramis; 'mongst wonders
Of the world it was the eighth.

Queen Semiramis, whose childhood
With the birds was spent, who reared her,
Many birdlike ways and habits
In her later life retained;

And, unwilling to go walking
On the flat and common earth,
Like us other common mortals,
Made a garden in the air—

High on pillars proud, colossal,
Shone the cypresses and palms,
Marble statues, beds of flowers,
Golden oranges and fountains;

All most cunningly and surely
Bound by countless hanging bridges,
That might well have passed as creepers,
And on which the birds kept swinging—

Birds of many colours, solemn,
Big, contemplative and songless,
While the tiny, happy finches,
Gaily warbling, fluttered round them—

All were breathing, blest and happy,
Breathing pure and balmy fragrance,
Unpolluted by the squalid,
Evil odours of the earth.

The Hagada is a garden,
Is just such another whimsy
Of a child of air; and often
Would the youthful Talmud scholar,

When his heart was dazed and dusty
With the strifes of the Halacha,
With disputes about the fatal
Egg the hen laid on a feast day,

Or concerning other problems
Of the same profound importance—
He would turn to seek refreshment
In the blossoming Hagada,

Where the beautiful old sagas,
Legends dim, and angel-fables,
Pious stories of the martyrs,
Festal hymns and proverbs wise,

And hyperboles the drollest,
But withal so strong and burning
With belief—where all, resplendent,
Welled and sprouted with luxuriance!

And the generous heart and noble
Of the boy was taken captive
By the wild romantic sweetness,
By the wondrous aching rapture,

By the weird and fabled terrors
Of that blissful secret world,
Of that mighty revelation
For which poetry our name is.

And the art that goes to make it,
Gracious power, happy knowledge,
Which we call the art poetic,
To his understanding opened.

And Jehuda ben Halevy
Was not only scribe and scholar,
But of poetry a master,
Was himself a famous poet;

Yes, a great and famous poet,
Star and torch to guide his time,
Light and beacon of his nation;
Was a wonderful and mighty

Fiery pillar of sweet song,
Moving on in front of Israel's
Caravans of woe and mourning
In the wilderness of exile.

True and pure, and without blemish
Was his singing, like his soul—
The Creator having made it,
With his handiwork contented,

Kissed the lovely soul, and echoes
Of that kiss for ever after
Thrilled through all the poet's numbers,
By that gracious deed inspired.

As in life, in song the highest
Good of all is simply grace,
And who hath it cannot sin in
Either poetry or prose.

And that man we call a genius,
By the grace of God a poet,
Monarch absolute, unquestioned,
In the realm of human thought.

None but God can call the poet
To account, the people never—
As in art, in life the people
Can but kill, they cannot judge us.

II.

"By the Babylonish waters
We sat down and wept for Zion,
Hung our harps upon the willows—"
Dost remember the old song?

Dost remember the old tune
That begins so elegiac,
Groaning, humming like a kettle,
Humming, singing on the hearth?

Long—a thousand years already—
It has boiled in me—dark sorrow!
And Time licks my wounds in passing
As the dog the boils of Job.

Dog, I thank thee for thy spittle—
But it merely cools and soothes me—
Only death can ever heal me,
And, alas! I am immortal!

Years, revolving, come and vanish;
To and fro the spool is humming
In the loom, and never resting;
What it weaves no weaver knows.

Years they come and years they vanish,
And the tears of men keep trickling,
Running earthward, and the earth
Sucks them in in greedy silence.

Seething wild! The lid is off now!—
Hail to him with ruthless hand
Who shall seize thy helpless children
And shall dash them 'gainst a rock.

God be praised! The steam's escaping,
And the kettle sinks to silence.
Gone the anger of the orient,
Seething gloomy in the west—

And my wingëd steed, grown merry,
Whinnies glad again, appearing
To shake off the horrid nightmare.
His sagacious eyes seem asking:

"Shall we turn, and back to Spain now,
To the little Talmud scholar
Who became a famous poet,
To Jehuda ben Halevy?"

Yes, he grew to be a poet!
In the realms of dream a ruler:
King of thought, whom none might question,
Crowned, a poet by God's favour,

Who devoutly in sirventes,
In sweet madrigals, ghaselas,
Canzonets and terzarima
Poured out freely all the ardours

Of his God-kissed poet's soul!
Yes, this troubadour was equal
To the best who played aforetime
On the lute in old Provence.

In Poitou and in Guienne,
Roussillon, and all the other
Lands where golden grows the orange,
Gallant lands of Christendom.

Lands of gallant Christendom,
Of the orange, sweet and golden,
How they shine and ring, still fragrant
In the twilight of remembrance.

World of nightingales, how fair!
Where instead of worship rendered
To the true God, Love, the false god,
And the muses were adored.

Clergy, crowned with wreaths of roses
On their tonsures, sung the psalms
In the happy Languedoc,
And the laity, good knights,

Proudly ambled on their chargers,
Conning rhymes and amorous verses
To the glory of the lady
Whom their heart was happy serving.

For with love there must be ladies,
And the lady was as needful
To the tuneful minnesinger
As, to bread and butter, butter.

And the hero whom we sing of,
Our Jehuda ben Halevy,
Had his heart's beloved lady,
But a strange one he had chosen.

For the lady was no Laura,
She whose eyes, sweet mortal stars,
In the minster on Good Friday
Lit the fire for ever famous—

Was no chatelaine who, radiant
In the bloom of youthful beauty,
O'er the tourneying presided,
And bestowed the wreath of laurel—

Was no casuist who lectured
On the law concerning kisses,
In the college of a court of
Love, a learned doctrinaire.

She, beloved of the Rabbi,
Was most sorrowful and wretched,
Piteous spectacle of ruin,
And was called Jerusalem.

In the early days of childhood
All his love was hers already,
And his soul would thrill and quiver
At the name Jerusalem.

With a cheek of flaming scarlet,
Stood the boy, and hearkened, eager,
When a pilgrim to Toledo
From the distant orient journeyed.

And described the desolation
And pollution of the city,
Where a trail of light still lingered
From the prophets' holy feet;

Where the air with God's eternal
Breath is balmy still and fragrant—
"Oh, the spectacle how piteous!"
Cried a pilgrim with a beard

Flowing down as white as silver,
But which turned, towards the tip,
Sable-hued again, thus seeming
To renew its vanished youth.

A most strange and curious pilgrim
Must the man have been; his eyes
Peered from centuries of sorrow,
And he groaned, "Jerusalem!

"She, the thronged and holy city,
Is become a barren desert,
Where baboons and jackals, werwolves
Go their wicked way unhindered.

"Serpents, birds of night are nesting
In the walls decayed and crumbling,
Through the windows' airy arches
Gaze the foxes unmolested.

"And at times some ragged bondsman
Of the desert will appear,
And will feed his hump-backed camel
On the high untrodden grasses.

"On the noble heights of Zion,
Where the golden fortress towered,
Bearing witness, in its splendour,
To a mighty monarch's glory,

"There is nothing left but ruins,
Grey and overgrown with weeds,
And they gaze on one so sadly
That one fancies they are weeping.

"And the story goes that truly
Once a year they weep, and namely
On the ninth day of the month of
Ab—myself, with streaming eyes,

"I have seen the heavy tear-drops
From the mighty stones that trickled,
Heard the broken temple pillars
Utter cries and lamentations." . . .

Such reports of pious pilgrims
Wakened longings in the bosom
Of Jehuda ben Halevy:
Towards Jerusalem he yearned.

Poets' yearning! Bodeful, dreamy,
And as fatal as the longing
That once filled the noble Vidam
To his hurt in Castle Blay—

Messer Geöffroy Rudello,
When the knight, returning homeward
From the East, amid the ringing
Of the festal goblets swore

That the type of every virtue,
Pearl and flower of all women,
Was the lovely Melisanda,
Margravine of Tripoli.

How the troubadour adoring
Sang and raved about the lady,
All have heard; at length too narrow
Seemed his home at Castle Blay.

By resistless longing driven,
He took ship at Cette to seek her,
But grew sick on board, and, dying,
Reached the town of Tripoli.

Here his eyes beheld the lady,
Gazed indeed on Melisanda,
But the self-same hour they darkened
With the dreary shades of death.

Here, his final love-song singing,
At her feet he breathed his last,
At the feet of Melisanda,
Margravine of Tripoli.

Strange the wonderful resemblance
In the fate of both the poets;
Only, one was old already
When on pilgrimage he started.

At the feet of his beloved
Died Jehuda ben Halevy;
And his dying head he rested
On Jerusalem's fair knees.

III.

After great King Alexander
Won the fight at Arabella
All the wealth of King Darius,
Land and people, court and harem,

Women, elephants, and horses,
Sceptre, crown, and coins, he stuck them—
Golden plunder—in his roomy,
Baggy Macedonian trousers.

In the tent of great Darius,
Who had fled lest he should also
Be impounded thus, the youthful
Hero found a precious casket,

Found a little gilded casket
Decked with cameos, and gorgeous
With encrusted stones and precious,
And with dainty miniatures.

Now, this box, itself a gem
Of inestimable value,
Was the case in which Darius
Kept his priceless body-jewels.

These were given by Alexander
To the bravest of his soldiers,
With a smile to think that men could
Care for coloured stones like children.

One, a gem most fair and costly,
He presented to his mother:
'Twas the signet ring of Cyrus,
And was made into a brooch.

And his champion debater,
Aristotle, got an onyx,
To be placed in his museum
Of the curious things of nature.

In the casket there was also
A most wondrous string of pearls,
Which the false and self-styled Smerdis
Once had given to Atossa.

But the pearls were rare and real,
And the merry victor gave them
To the pretty dancer Thais,
Her whose birthplace was at Corinth.

In her hair this Thais wore them—
Hair that streamed like a Bacchante's—
On the night of conflagration
At Persepolis, when, dancing,

With an impious hand she flung her
Torch and struck the royal fortress,
Which flamed upward, crackling loudly
Like the fireworks at a *fête.*

On the death of lovely Thais,
Who in Babylon fell victim
To a Babylonish sickness,
Straight disposed of were the pearls.

They were sold by public auction.
'Twas a priest of Memphis bought them,
And he carried them to Egypt,
Where they graced the toilet-table

Of Queen Cleopatra later,
Who the fairest of the pearls
Crushed and swallowed in her wine,
Quizzing Antony, her lover.

With the latest of the Ommiads
Came the string of pearls to Spain,
And at Cordova was twisted
Round the turban of the Caliph.

Abderam the third then wore it
As a breast-knot at the tourney,
Where through thirty golden rings
And Zuleima's heart he pierced.

When the Moors were overthrown,
Into Christian hands the pearls
Passed with other things, and figured
As crown jewels of Castile.

And their majesties, the papish
Spanish queens thereafter wore them
At their courtly routs and revels,
At the bull-fights and processions;

On the high occasions, also,
When the heretics were burning,
And the smell of old Jews roasting,
On their balconies refreshed them.

Later still that son of Satan,
Mendizabel, pawned the pearls
To procure a sum to cover
Gaps and deficits financial.

And at last the string of pearls
In the Tuileries appeared,
Madame Salomon adorning:
On the Baroness's bosom.

Such the story of the pearls.
Less adventurous the fortunes
Of the casket. Alexander
For his royal use retained it,

And he locked therein the songs
Of divine, ambrosial Homer—
Bard he loved beyond all others—
By his couch at night it stood.

Slept the king, the shining figures
Of the heroes, from the casket
Slipping forth, in fond illusion
Lived and wandered in his dreams.

Other times, and other birds—
I, of yore I loved them also,
Loved the songs and deeds heroic
Of Pelides, of Odysseus.

Then I felt that all was golden
As the sun, and flaming purple,
And my brow was crowned with vine leaves,
And I heard the fanfares blowing.

But enough!—O'erthrown and broken
Lies my proud, victorious chariot,
And the panthers that once drew it
Now are dead, and dead the women,

Who with drum and clash of cymbals
Danced around me. I, myself,
On the floor am turning, tossing,
Weak and crippled here—no more!

Hush! No more!—Our present subject
Is the casket of Darius,
And I thought if I should ever
Gain possession of that casket,

And was not compelled directly
By financial straits to sell it,
I should like to lock within it
All the poems of our Rabbi,

Of Jehuda ben Halevy;—
Festal songs and lamentations,
The ghaselas, and description
Of the pilgrimage he went on.

Written plainly it should be
By a skilful scribe, on parchment
Of the purest, and bestowed
In the little golden casket.

It should stand upon a table
By my bed, and when my friends
Came and marvelled at the splendour
Of the little chest beside me,

At the curious bas-reliefs
So diminutive, yet perfect
In their finish, at the inlay
Of the big and costly jewels,

I would smile and I would tell them:—
That is nothing but the shell
Which contains the nobler treasure
In this little casket lying.

There are diamonds that mirror,
With their light, the light of heaven;
There are rubies red as heart's blood,
There are turquoises unblemished.

Also emeralds of promise,
Yes, and pearls of purer beauty
Than those given to Atossa
By the rank impostor Smerdis;

And which ornamented later
All the great, distinguished figures
Of this moon-encircled planet—
Thais first, then Cleopatra,

Priests of Isis, Moorish princes,
And the queens of old Hispania,
And the worthy baron's lady,
Madame Salomon, at last.

For those pearls of world-wide glory
Are but pale, secreted mucus
Of a sick and wretched oyster
At the bottom of the sea;

While the pearls within this casket
Are the precious overflow
Of a lovely spirit, deeper
Than the deepest depths of ocean.

For these pearls, they are the tear-drops
Of Jehuda ben Halevy,
That he wept for the destruction
Of the town Jerusalem.—

Pearly tears that, strung together
On the golden thread of rhyme,
From the poet's golden forge
Issued perfect, as a song.

And this string of pearly tears
Is the famous lamentation
Sung in all the tents of Jacob
Lying scattered through the world,

On the ninth day of the month
Known as Ab, which was the date
Of Jerusalem's destruction
By the Emperor Vespasian,

Yes, Jehuda ben Halevy
Sang that famous hymn of Zion
As he lay amid the ruins
Of Jerusalem, and died.

There, in penitential raiment
He sat barefoot on a fragment
Of a crumbled, fallen pillar;
To his breast his hair fell matted,

Like a white and snowy forest,
From whose strange, fantastic shadow
Gleamed the pallid face of sorrow
With its wan and ghostly eyes.

So Jehuda ben Halevy
Sat, and singing, seemed a prophet
Of the olden days: seemed ancient
Jeremiah grave-arisen.

And the wild lament of sorrow
Tamed the birds amid the ruins,
And the very vultures hearkened,
Neared and hearkened, as in pity.

But a Saracen came riding
Bold and haughty down the pathway,
In his lofty saddle swaying,
Swung his impious, naked lance.

Pierced the poor old singer's bosom
With the fatal spear of death,
Swiftly galloped off and left him,
Like a wingëd form of shadow.

And the Rabbi's blood flowed softly,
And he calmly finished singing,
Sang his song out, and his death-sigh
Was the name Jerusalem!—

But an ancient legend has it
'Twas no insolent and evil
Wretched Saracen that slew him,
But an angel in disguise,

Who was sent express from heaven
To deliver God's beloved
From the earth, and speed him painless
To the kingdom of the blessed;

And it tells us that, up yonder,
A reception was awaiting
Full of flattery to a poet:
A most heavenly surprise;

For a festal choir of angels
Came with music forth to meet him,
And the hymn they sang in welcome
Was composed of his own verses:

Sabbath's hymeneal numbers
Sung in synagogues at bridals,
With the melodies familiar—
Ah, what notes of jubilation!

Little angels blew the hautbois,
Little angels played the fiddle,
Others swept the strings of viols
To the clash of drum and cymbal.

And it rang and sang so sweetly,
Sweetly sounded and re-echoed
In the vasty halls of heaven:
"Lecho dodi likrath kallah."

IV.

Most dissatisfied my wife is
With the chapter just concluded,
And, above all, in connection
With the casket of Darius.

Almost bitter was her comment:
That a married man who truly
Was religious, without waiting
Would have realised that casket,

Would have spent at once the proceeds
On his poor, his lawful wife:
Would the cashmere shawl have purchased
That she stood so much in need of.

For Jehuda ben Halevy
Quite sufficient were the honour—
So she thought—of being guarded
In a pretty box of pasteboard

Decked with elegant and Chinese
Arabesque, like those delightful
Bonbon boxes of Marquis's
In the Passage Panorama.

"It is very strange," she added,
"That I never heard him mentioned,
Never heard the name so famous
Of Jehuda ben Halevy."

"Dearest child," I answered gravely,
"This sweet ignorance of yours
Only shows how very faulty
Is the education given

"In the boarding-schools of Paris
Where the maidens—future mothers
Of a great and free-born people—
Are supposed to be instructed.

"All the facts concerning mummies,
The embalmed Egyptian Pharaohs,
Shadowy Merovingian monarchs,
And perukes devoid of powder,

"Pig-tailed potentates of China,
Kings of porcelain-built pagodas—
All to memory committed,
Clever maidens! But, ye heavens!

"If one asks the name most famous
In the glorious golden age,
Of the Jewish school of poets,
The Arabian Old-Spanish—

"For the starry trio asks them,
For Jehuda ben Halevy,
For great Solomon Gabirol,
Or for Moses Iben Esra—

"For such names if one should ask them,
Then they know not what to answer,
And the children stare dumbfounded,
Puzzled, stare with wondering eyes.

"I advise you strongly, dearest,
To retrieve those past omissions,
And to learn the Hebrew language.
Leave your theatres and concerts,

"And devote some years to study.
You will then with ease be able
In the ancient text to read them,
Iben Esra and Gabirol,

"And, of course, the great Halevy,
The triumvirate poetic,
Who of old the sweetest music
Drew from out the harp of David.

"Alcharisi whom, I wager,
You know nothing of, though Gallic
And a wit he was, outjesting
The romances of Hariri

"In his skilful Hebrew measures,
And a true Voltaire, six hundred
Years before Voltaire was heard of—
Said this witty Alcharisi,

"'In the realm of thought Gabirol
Shines, and pleases best the thinker,
While in art shines Iben Esra,
And thereby delights the artist;

"'But Jehuda ben Halevy,
Both their attributes combining,
Is a great and glorious poet
And beloved of all alike.'"

Iben Esra was a friend,
Was, indeed, I think, a cousin
Of Jehuda ben Halevy.
In his book of travels, sadly

He laments that in Granada
He went journeying, seeking vainly
For his friend, but none could find there,
Save the brother, Rabbi Meyer,

The physician and the poet,
And the father of that fair one,
Who with flames of hopeless passion
Lit the heart of Iben Esra.

To forget his little niece,
He took up his pilgrim's staff,
Like so many of his comrades,
And lived homeless and unsettled.

To Jerusalem while wandering,
He was set on by some Tartars.
To a horse they bound him, bare him
As a captive to their desert.

There the services he rendered
Were unworthy of a Rabbi,
Still unworthier of a poet—
He was forced to milk the cows.

As he sat beneath the belly
Of a cow once, as he squatted
Nimbly drawing at the udder,
Sending milk into the pail—

A position most unworthy
Of a Rabbi and a poet—
He was overcome with sorrow,
And he raised his voice, and sang.

And he sang so well and sweetly
That the Khan, the tribal leader,
Who was passing by was melted,
To the slave restored his freedom;

Adding gifts thereto: a fox-skin
And a mandolin—the long one
Of the Saracen musicians—
And his travelling expenses.

Fate of poets! Star ill-omened
That harasses with such deadly
Grudge the offspring of Apollo,
And that spared not even the father,

Who, sweet Daphne erst pursuing,
When he clasped the nymph's white body,
Found his arms about the laurel—
He the heavenly Schlemihl!

Yes, the high, the Delphic God is
A Schlemihl; the very laurel
That so proudly crowns his forehead
Is a sign of his Schlemihldom.

What the word Schlemihl betokens,
Well we know: Chamisso gave it
Long ago its German, civic
Rights—at least the word received them.

Not yet ascertained, however,
Is its origin—as little
As the sources of the Nile are—
Many a night I've spent in puzzling.

And though, years ago, I travelled
To Berlin to see Chamisso,
And to gather information
From the dean about Schlemihl,

I received no satisfaction,
Was referred by him to Hitzig,
Who had first betrayed the surname
Of this Peter without shadow.

Upon this I took a droschke
And set off without delaying,
To the magistrate, Herr Hitzig,
Who in former days was Itzig.

While he still was known as Itzig,
In a dream he saw his name
As it stood inscribed in heaven,
With the letter H before it.

And he asked, "What is the meaning
Of this H? Perhaps Herr Itzig,
Or the holy Itzig. Holy
Is a fair and goodly title—

"But unsuited to Berlin."
So he took the name of Hitzig,
Tired of puzzling; as a saint
He is known but by the faithful.

So I said, when I had found him,
"Holy Hitzig, prithee, tell me,
And explain the derivation
Of the curious word Schlemihl."

Then the saint became evasive,
Said he could not quite remember,
Tried to shuffle, dodged the question,
In the truly Christian spirit.

Till at last I burst the buttons
Of the breeches of my patience,
And began to swear so fiercely,
Yes, so blasphemously swore

That the godly man and pious,
Pale as death, with knees that trembled,
On the spot my prayer granted,
And the following story told me.

In the Bible it is written
How that, wandering in the desert,
Israel often sought diversion
With the daughters fair of Canaan;

And it came to pass that Phinehas
One day saw the noble Zimri
Carrying on an amorous intrigue
With a Canaanitish woman.

On the instant, in his anger
He had seized his spear and hurled it,
Madly hurled it, slaying Zimri—
So the Bible tells the story.

But a legend 'mongst the people
Has been orally transmitted
Which denies that it was Zimri
Whom the spear of Phinehas slew.

And maintains that, blind with passion,
Phinehas slew not the transgressor,
But another who was guiltless—
Slew Schlemihl ben Zuri Schadday.

This Schlemihl I. was founder
Of the race of the Schlemihls;
We are lineally descended
From Schlemihl ben Zuri Schadday.

It is true no deeds heroic
Have been told of him; our knowledge
Is confined to his cognomen.
He was named, we know, Schlemihl.

But on trees that give one's lineage
It is never fruit we ask for;
It is age, and ours, we reckon,
Has endured three thousand years.

Years they come and years they vanish;
Full three thousand years have fleeted
Since the passing of our founder,
Herr Schlemihl ben Zuri Schadday.

It is long since Phinehas also
Died, yet still his spear is with us,
And above our heads unpausing
We can hear its fatal whizzing.

And the noblest hearts it pierces,
Like Jehuda ben Halevy's,
And like Moses Iben Esra's;
Yea, Gabirol, too, was stricken.

Great Gabirol, true and loyal,
God-devoted minnesinger,
Pious nightingale who sang not
To a rose, but to his God—

Tender nightingale who sweetly
Sang his love-songs in the dimness,
In the darkness of the Gothic,
Of the mediæval night!

Undismayed, and fearing nothing
From the ugly shapes and spirits,
From the waste of death and madness
Which that night so weirdly haunted,

He, the nightingale, thought only
Of his heavenly beloved,
'Twas to Him he sobbed his passion,
It was He his song exalted.

Only thirty springs Gabirol
On our earth beheld, but Fama
Through all lands proclaimed the glory
Of his name with sounding trumpet.

Now at Cordova, his city,
Dwelt a Moor, his next-door neighbour,
Who wrote verses too, and envied
Sore the poet his renown.

When he heard the poet singing,
Straight the Moor would swell with rancour;
To his jealousy the sweetness
Of the song was bitter sorrow.

He enticed his hated rival
To his house by night, and slew him,
And, behind the house, the body
In a garden plot he buried.

But behold! From out the ground
Where the body had been hidden
Sprang a fig tree forth, and blossomed—
Tree of great and wondrous beauty.

Of a curious length its fruit was,
And of strange and spicy sweetness,
And who ate thereof sank swooning
In a trance of dreamy rapture.

And because of this the people
Fell to talking and to muttering,
Till at last the spreading rumour
Reached the Caliph's high-born ears.

Then this marvel among fig trees
By the Caliph's self was tested,
Who appointed a commission
To investigate the matter.

They proceeded straight to business,
Gave the owner of the fig tree
Sixty strokes upon his soles
With the bamboo; forced confession;

To the fig tree went, and tore it
By its roots from out the ground,
And discovered, hid beneath it,
Poor Gabirol's murdered body.

This with pomp and state was buried
And lamented by the brethren,
And that day the Moor was taken,
And at Cordova was hanged.

DISPUTATION.

In the Aula at Toledo
  Trumpets peal their fanfares loud;
To the intellectual tourney,
  Gaily decked, the masses crowd.

'Tis no common earthly combat,
  And no iron weapons glance;
Nay, by learning sharply pointed,
  'Tis the word that is the lance.

Those who tilt here serve not ladies,
  Are no gallant Paladins;
In this combat all the knights are
  Rabbis grave and Capuchins.

Not on helmets but on skull-caps
  And on cowls they place reliance,
And their sacerdotal vestments
  Form their armour of defiance.

Is the Hebrew God the true one—
  He, the one, the fixed, the far,
For whose glory stands, as champion,
  Rabbi Juda of Navarre?

Is the Christian God the true one—
  Triune God of grace and love,
As the champion, Franciscan
  Friar José hopes to prove?

By the logic-linked sorites,
  And by arguments of weight,
By quotations from the authors
  Most acknowledged in debate,

Fain each champion his rival
  Would to *ad absurdum* lure,
Of the true and only Godhead
  Giving demonstration sure.

The agreement is: whoever
  Is defeated in the fight,
The religion of his rival
  Shall accept, and own as right;

That the sacrament the Hebrew
  Shall partake of, be baptized,
While the Christian for his failure
  Shall be duly circumcised.

And eleven loyal comrades
  Has each champion by his side,
All resolved to share his fortunes,
  Whether weal or woe betide.

Full of faith the monks who figure
As the prior's escort stand,
With the holy water ready,
With the vessel in their hand;

And they wave the shining censer,
Nor the sprinkling brush forget,
While the knife of circumcision
Their opponents grimly whet.

In the hall, for battle ready,
By the lists the factions wait,
And the throng expects the signal,
All impatient and elate.

With their courtiers gathered round them,
'Neath a canopy of gold,
Sit the king and queen—the queen is
Still a child; her features hold—

In her small French nose you see it—
In their mirth a roguish guile,
But bewitching are the rubies
Of her lips that always smile.

Lovely, fragile, fickle flower,
May God shield her now from harm!
Poor, unlucky thing, transplanted
From the Seine, so gay and warm,

To the rigid soil that nurtures
Spanish grandees, proud and vain.
Blanche de Bourbon, reared in France, is
Donna Blanca, now of Spain.

And the king is called Don Pedro,
To which men "the Cruel" add,
But to-day he seems too gentle
To deserve a name so bad.

He engages with the nobles
Of the court in converse bright,
To the Moors and Jews addresses
Many speeches most polite.

'Mongst the knights the circumcised ones
In his favour highest stand,
They control the State finances,
And the royal troops command.

But the blare of drum and trumpet
Has announced with sudden din
That the war of tongues is starting:
That the athletes will begin.

The Franciscan friar grimly
Forth in pious fury breaks;
Now his voice is loud and blustering,
Now with growling menace shakes.

In the name of God the Father,
Of the Son and Holy Ghost,
He has exorcised the Rabbi,
Jacob's seed accurst and lost;

For in combats of this nature
Little devils often hide
In the Jews, whose wits they sharpen,
And with arguments provide.

Having exorcised the Devil,
Back on dogma now he falls,
Seeks to bowl his rival over
With his catechismal balls.

He informs him that the Godhead
Is composed of persons three,
Who, however, when convenient,
One, and only one, may be.

Great the mystery, and only
To be understood of those
Whom the prison walls of reason
No more darken and enclose.

And at Bethlehem, he tells them
How a son the Virgin bore:
Bore the Saviour of the world,
Yet was virgin as before;

How they laid Him in a manger—
  Laid the Lord of earth, most high,
With a calf and heifer meekly
  And devoutly standing by.

He related how the Saviour
  From King Herod's minions fled
Into Egypt, and how, later,
  Before Pontius Pilate led,

He was crucified; how Pilate
  Was unable to refuse
To pronounce His doom, so urgent
  Were the Pharisees and Jews.

How the Lord, albeit buried,
  On the third day rose again,
And ascended into heaven,
  He recounted to them plain;

And how Christ to earth returning
  On the day of doom and dread,
To Jehoshaphat will summon
  And will judge the quick and dead.

"Tremble, Jews!" the prior thundered,
  "And before the Lord bow down
Whom ye did to death and tortured
  With your whips and thorny crown.

"Ye, His murderers vindictive
And athirst for vengeance blind,
Still ye plot against the Saviour,
The Redeemer of mankind.

"O ye Jews, ye are a carcase
Where infernal demons dwell,
And your bodies are the barracks
Of the Devil's hosts from hell.

"So says Thomas of Aquinas,
Whom they call the Mighty Ox
Among scholars, light and pleasure
Of the truly orthodox.

"O ye Jews! ye are hyenas,
Wolves and jackals burrowing foul
In the graves; ye search for corpses
For whose blood with greed ye howl.

"Ye are hogs, O Jews! and monkeys,
Ye are beasts with snout and horn,
Yes, rhinoceroses, vampires,
Ye are crocodiles, mud-born.

"Ye are owls and ye are ravens,
Ye are bats that fear the light,
Ye are cockatrices, screech-owls,
And the gallows-birds of night.

"Ye are rattlesnakes and blindworms,
Toads envenomed, vipers dread;
Ye are asps and ye are adders—
Christ will crush your cursëd head.

"Or, ye damned ones, would ye rather
Save your souls and turn to grace?
From the synagogues of evil
Fly, and seek the holy place:

"Seek the Church of love, the bright one,
Where the fount that purges sin
Flows in mercy's hallowed basins;
Bow your heads and dip them in.

"Wash away the ancient Adam,
Cleanse the vile and vicious parts;
Wash the inveterate mould of hatred,
Wash it clean from out your hearts!

"Ye can surely hear the Saviour
Calling each by his new name;
On His bosom drop the vermin
Of your sin and of your shame!

"For our God is Love incarnate,
And no lamb could milder be;
To atone for our transgressions
He was nailed upon a tree.

"Yes, our God is Love incarnate—
Jesus Christ His name most sweet.
His humility we copy,
And His patience, as is meet.

"Hence we, too, are mild and gentle,
Slow to anger and humane,
For the Lamb is our ensample
Who, to purge our sin, was slain.

"And hereafter, up in heaven,
We shall go as angels bright,
Pious angels blest for ever,
In our hands a lily white.

"We shall walk in spotless raiment,
Cast these clumsy cowls of grey—
Wear brocade, and silk, and muslin,
Golden tassels, ribbons gay.

"No more tonsures! Golden tresses
Round our heads will wave and shine,
Charming virgins, deft of finger,
Will our hair in pigtails twine.

"And, on high, the festal goblets
Shall be made of ampler girth
Than the cups that down below, here,
Hold the foaming wine of earth.

"On the other hand much smaller
Than below will, up above,
Be the mouths of the dear women
Given each of us to love.

"There, in drinking, kissing, laughter,
We shall pass our deathless days,
Singing happy hallelujahs,
Singing holy songs of praise."

Here the Christian ceased. The friars,
Thinking all must see the light,
Hastened forward with the vessels
For the great baptismal rite.

But the water-hating Hebrews,
Jeering, rouse themselves for war,
And the champion commences—
Rabbi Juda of Navarre.

"That my spirit's barren acres
For thy seed might want not dung,
Thou most doughtily thy insults
By the barrow-load hast flung.

"Each man follows but the method
To which custom ease hath lent.
For my part, I do not chide thee,
Nay, I thank thee, well content.

"Of this Trinitarian doctrine
Must a race deny the truth,
That the Rule of Three has studied
From the early days of youth.

"That thy Godhead should three persons,
And no greater number, hold,
Is most moderate; the ancients
Had six thousand gods of old.

"I am ignorant entirely
Of the God whom 'Christ' ye name;
With his pure and virgin mother
No acquaintance can I claim.

"That he suffered many years since—
Some twelve hundred, I believe—
In Jerusalem annoyance,
Is a thing for which I grieve.

"As to who it was that killed him
Must remain a point uncleared,
The *delicta corpus* having
On the third day disappeared.

"What you say of his connection
With our God, I beg to doubt;
If our God had any children,
'Tis a fact has ne'er come out.

"Nor did our God ever perish
Like a lamb, to save mankind.
No soft, silly, philanthropic
Fool is He, both weak and blind.

"He is far from Love incarnate;
His caresses none have known;
God of thunder and of vengeance
Is the Deity we own.

"On each sinner, without mercy,
Fall the lightnings of His hate;
The transgressions of the fathers
Children's children expiate.

"Yes, our God is great and living;
In His heavenly halls for aye
He has dwelt, and will endure there
Till the ages pass away.

"He is living, He is lusty—
Is not mythical and pale
As a consecrated wafer,
Or Cocytus' shadows frail.

"He is strong. Sun, moon, and planets,
In His hand He holds them all;
When He frowns the nations perish,
And the thrones in ruin fall.

" 'Yea, His greatness none can measure,'
Sings King David, psalmist sweet,
'And the earth which we inhabit
Is a footstool for His feet.'

" He is fond of pleasant music,
Festal hymns, the harp divine,
But the sound of church bells ringing
He abhors like grunting swine.

" Where Leviathan the mighty
Lives in ocean, housed for aye,
For an hour the Lord disports Him
With the monster every day,

" Save, of course, upon the ninth one
Of the month of Ab, when fell
Into ashes drear His temple;
Then the Lord feels far from well.

" Full a hundred miles this fish is
Of his length—with fins, to sail,
Quite as big as Og of Bashan;
Like a cedar is his tail.

" But his flesh is very dainty,
As the turtle's it is fine.
On the day of Resurrection
Will the Lord invite to dine

"All the pious and the chosen,
All the wise men and the good,
And this fish they will partake of—
The Almighty's favourite food;

"Part with garlic sauce dressed whitely,
Part in wine steeped: brown and nice,
And resembling somewhat matelotes
Cooked with raisins and with spice.

"In the white, the garlic gravy,
Thin horse-radish shavings float.
You, I wager, Friar José,
On the fish thus cooked would dote.

"Also brown, with sauce of raisins,
'Tis a dainty cannot cloy;
To your stomach, Friar José,
'Twere a sheer celestial joy.

"What the Lord has cooked is well cooked!
O ye monks, be wise at length!
Make the sacrifice that's needful;
On this fish renew your strength."

Smirking, smiling spake the Rabbi,
With enticing, luring tongue,
And the Jews the knife already,
Grunting rapturously, swung.

* * *

But the monks remained unshaken,
By their fathers' faith stood fast,
Quite determined to defend it
And its ritual to the last.

When the Jew had done, the Friar,
With converting zeal new-stirred,
The attack renewed; a vessel
Full of filth was every word.

To which speech replied the Rabbi,
With restrained and hidden heat;
Though his heart was boiling over
He contrived his gall to eat.

He appealed to the great Mischna,
To the commentaries, tracts;
From the Tausves-Jontof quoting,
To support and clinch his facts.

But what blasphemies appalling
From the monk his efforts bring!
He exclaims, "The Tausves-Jontof!
To the Devil with the thing!"

"Can profanity go further?"
Shrieks the Jew, in wrath amazed:
Shrieks, with patience quite exhausted,
As if suddenly gone crazed.

"If the Tausves-Jontof's nothing,
What is left? O Lord, give heed!
Lord, rebuke the evil-doer,
And avenge his dire misdeed!

"For, O God! the Tausves-Jontof
Is Thyself, and Thou must take
On Thy vile denier vengeance,
For Thy holy honour's sake!

"Bid the ground to yawn and open,
Bid it swallow him, as erst
At Thy word it swallowed Cora
And his impious band accurst.

"With Thy loudest thunders thunder!
Smite the bold blasphemer low—
For Gomorrah and for Sodom
Thou hadst sulphur long ago!

"Smite the Capuchin like Pharaoh,
Whom Thine anger smote of old,
When he followed us, who fled him,
Heavy laden with his gold.

"With a hundred thousand warriors
Marched this king, Mizrayim's lord,
All in armour clad, and shining,
In each awful hand a sword.

"With Thine arm outstretched, Jehovah,
Thou didst smite him; he was lost;
In the Red Sea, drowned like kittens,
Sank King Pharaoh and his host.

"Strike the Capuchin and show him—
Let the wretch degraded learn—
That the lightnings of Thine anger
Are not quenched: that still they burn.

"I will sing Thy praise and glory
When Thy might has overcome;
I will dance the dance of Miriam,
I will beat, like her, the drum."

At this point the angry friar
Forth in fury grimly burst:
"You yourself be damned forever
By the Lord, and die accurst!

"Before Ashtaroth and Belial,
Before Lucifer the proud,
And Beelzebub, the fly-god,
Before all I stand unbowed.

"I defy and mock your spirits,
Dark buffooneries of hell;
For of Jesus Christ I've eaten,
And within me He doth dwell.

"'Tis a food transcends all others:
It surpasses in delight
The Leviathan whom Satan
May have cooked with garlic white.

"Ah, instead of thus disputing
I would sooner on the fire
Bake and roast you with your comrades,
On a flaming funeral pyre!"

So with insult and in earnest
Raged the fight for God and creed,
But the champions quite vainly
Storm and scold and pant and plead.

They have fought twelve hours already;
Still remote the end desired;
And the audience has grown weary,
And the women hot and tired.

Even the Court is now impatient;
Ladies try to yawn unseen;
And the king, Don Pedro, turning,
Puts the question to the queen:

"Tell me frankly what opinion
You have come to; who is right?
Has the monk or has the Rabbi
Won the honours of the fight?"

Donna Blanca gazes puzzled;
Fingers twined, as if in thought,
Presses hard against her forehead,
Then she answers, as besought:

"Which is right," she says, "I know not,
But there's one thing I can tell:
I am sure both monk and Rabbi
Have a most offensive smell."

LAST POEMS.

(1853-1856.)

LAST POEMS.

YEARNING FOR PEACE.

Oh, let thy wounds unhindered bleed,
And let thy tears unchidden flow,
For weeping is a balsam mild,
And secret rapture dwells in woe.

If strangers' hands have dealt no hurt,
Then thou thyself must wield the rod.
When tears are wet upon thy cheek,
Devoutly thank a pitying God.

The night descends with streaming veils
Now day's discordant noises cease;
Upon her bosom thou shalt rest,
No blusterer loud to mar thy peace.

From music thou shalt be secure,
A respite from pianos win—
From terrible bravura shrieks,
And the grand opera's splendid din.

Here none shall persecute thy calm
With great Giacomo's vaunted name:
No virtuosi crash and pound
In illustration of his fame.

O grave! thou art the Paradise
Of ears that shrink from vulgar mirth.
Ah! death is good, but better still
Our mothers had not given us birth.

IN MAY.

THE friends I kissed and loved of yore
Have done their worst and wronged me sore.
My heart is breaking; yet how gay
The laughing sun still welcomes May!

Sweet spring's in blossom. Loud and long
The echoing greenwood rings with song,
And flowers and maids are smiling bright—
O lovely world of loathed delight!

Grim Orcus I could almost praise;
No cruel contrasts there amaze.
Ah, happier is the anguished soul
Where Stygian waters darkly roll.

The melancholy surge and fall,
And the Stymphalides' drear call,
The furies' sing-song shrill and keen,
With Cerberus baying loud between—

Such things as these suit well with woe.
In the sad vale where shadows go,
In Proserpine's accurst domain
All is attuned to tears and pain.

But here above to me, forlorn,
How wounding is the rose's thorn;
The May-sky mocks me, blue and bright;
O lovely world of loathed delight!

BABYLONIAN SORROWS.

DEATH calls me—sweet, 'twere almost kind
To leave thee in some wood behind,
Some drear and lonely pinewood filled
With howling wolves, where vultures build,
And the wild sow with horrid snore
Grunts to her mate, the tawny boar.

Death calls me—O my wife, my child,
Better upon the ocean wild
To leave thee, where the great floods roll,
And maddened north winds from the Pole

Lash the loud waves, while, from the deep,
The monstrous things that hidden sleep—
The sharks and crocodiles—with grim
And gaping jaws come forth and swim!
Trust me, Matilda, child and wife,
The daunting wood is not so rife
With dangers, nor the angry foam
Of churning seas, as this our home.
Dread though the wolf and vulture be,
And sharks and monsters of the sea,
Far deadlier beasts are housed than they
In lovely Paris, brilliant, gay,
Where song and mirth and dancing dwell,
The heaven of fiends, the angels' hell.
To leave thee here! It is a thought
With fever and with madness fraught!

Black flies are whirling round me now;
They tease and buzz—on nose and brow
I feel them light—detested race!
They have an almost human face,
With elephants' trunks between their eyes,
Like India's god, Ganesa wise.—
There's someone packing up a box
Inside my head—how loud he knocks!
My reason will be gone, alas!
Ere I myself, so soon to pass.

THE SLAVE SHIP.

I.

THE supercargo Mynheer van Koek
Has gone to his cabin to count;
He is reckoning up what the cargo cost,
And to what the profits should mount.

"The gum is good, and the pepper is good,
Three hundred sacks they fill;
There is gold dust too, and ivory white,
But my black ware's better still.

"Six hundred niggers I bought dirt cheap,
In fact for the merest song,
By the Senegal river: their flesh is firm
And their sinews are taut and strong.

"Some brandy and steel and beads of glass
Was all I was forced to give;
Eight hundred per cent. I should make on the deal,
If even the half of them live.

"If even three hundred niggers survive,
Till we put into Rio Janeiro,
A hundred ducats per head are mine,
From the house of Gonzales Perreiro."

But Mynheer van Koek was suddenly torn
From thoughts of what he should win;
Van der Missen, the surgeon on board the boat,
Appeared at this point and came in.

He had crimson warts all over his nose,
And the leanest and driest of figures.
"Well, Doctor, how now?" exclaimed Van Koek;
"What news of my precious niggers?"

The doctor politely responds, and says,
"Alas! my report is bad,
The number of deaths has increased last night
In a manner that's really sad.

"The average number is only two,
But seven are dead to-day—
Four men, three women—I entered the loss
In the log in the usual way.

"I inspected the corpses minutely, of course,
For often the artful knaves
Pretend to be dead, in the hope that at dawn,
We'll lower them into the waves.

"I took off their irons with orders clear
That the bodies, when thus set free,
At an early hour should be carried on deck,
And tumbled into the sea.

"The sharks shot out of the water at once,
An army hungry and large,
They simply dóte upon niggers' flesh;
I board them and make no charge.

"The beasts have scented the odour of death,
And have followed, a ravenous host,
In the wake of the vessel by night and day,
Since ever we left the coast.

"It is really comic to see them crowd,
And snap at the dead as they fall—
At the head, at the legs, at the bits that remain,
Till at last they have gobbled up all.

"And when everything's swallowed, around the ship
Contented they splash and reel,
And gratefully look their thanks at me
For providing their morning meal."

But here Van Koek interrupts with a sigh,
"This evil, say, how can I stop?
Is there nothing at all we can possibly do
To make the death rate drop?"

The doctor answers, "The niggers themselves
Are to blame; their own foul breath
Has poisoned the wholesome air of the hold,
With the natural consequence, death.

"And many have died of boredom, too:
Of sheer monotonous sadness.
The epidemic might yet be stemmed
By music, dance, and gladness."

"An excellent notion!" exclaims Van Koek,
"An inspiration grander
Aristotle himself can never have had,
Who taught great Alexander.

"In Delft the president learned and wise
Of the tulip-improvement club
Is not half so clever, I'm sure, as you,
If it really came to the rub.

"Yes, music! music! the niggers up here
On the deck shall dance and skip,
And those who do not enjoy the fun,
Will be cured by means of the whip."

II.

A myriad stars from the tent of heaven
Are gazing, big and wise;
They are glimmering soft and yearning bright,
Like lovely women's eyes.

They look on the ocean spread below,
And the phosphorescent gleams
Of the purple mists. The billows lap
And coo in voluptuous dreams.

The slave ship carries no fluttering sail,
She lies like an unrigged boat;
But lanterns shine on the deck, whence sounds
Of dancing and music float.

On the fiddle the helmsman, the cook on the flute
They busily pipe and strum;
The doctor, he's blowing the trumpet loud,
The cabin-boy beats the drum.

A hundred niggers, both women and men,
They whirl and shout and hop.
Their fetters of iron are marking time,
With a rattle and ring and drop.

They stamp on the boards in riotous glee,
And many a swarthy belle
Throws amorous arms round her partner nude,
As they spin and dance and yell.

The purser conducts the revel; his whip
Flies out, and some screamer answers;
To mirth and frolic and gaiety wild
He stimulates lazy dancers.

And dideldumdei and schnedderedeng!
The noise lures up from the deep
The monstrous things of the watery world
That stupidly lay asleep.

With drowsiness drunk, a hundred sharks
From their couches in ocean rise,
And stare at the deck from the waves below
With puzzled and wondering eyes.

They perceive that it is not the breakfast hour,
And they yawn from the sea beneath
With open and angry jaws, set thick
With horrible serrate teeth.

And dideldumdei and schnedderedeng!
The dance will never be done,
And the sharks they are biting each other's tails,
Impatient till breakfast's begun.

To music, I think, they've an animus strong;
Their kind not infrequently show it;
The beast that's averse to music, shun,
Says Shakespeare, Albion's poet.

And schnedderedeng and dideldumdei—
Van Koek at the foremast stands,
And as dance succeeds to dance without end,
In prayer he folds his hands.

"Oh, spare the lives of these sinners black,"
He pleads above the rattle;
"Remember, if ever they roused Thy wrath,
O Lord! they're as stupid as cattle.

"And unless three hundred head remain,
I'll lose my hoped-for haul;
Oh, spare their lives for Jesus' sake,
Who died to save us all."

THE PHILANTHROPIST.

THERE were two, a brother and sister;
The brother was rich, the sister was poor.
The poor one said to the rich one,
"Give me a morsel of bread."

The rich one said to the poor one,
"Nay, trouble me not just now,
I am giving my annual dinner
To the lords of the Senate to-day.

"To turtle-soup one is devoted,
Another to pine-apples sweet,
The third is partial to pheasants
With Perigord truffles dressed.

"The fourth will have nothing but sea-fish,
The fifth takes salmon as well;
The sixth devours all put before him,
And drinks even more than he eats."

And so the poor, poor sister
Went hungry back to her house,
Sank down on her hard straw mattress,
And deeply sighed, and died.

We all must die when our time comes,
And at last the scythe of death
Mowed down the wealthy brother,
As, already, the sister poor.

As soon as the wealthy brother
Perceived that his hour was come,
He sent in haste for the lawyer,
And straightway made his will.

Big legacies to the clergy
He left, and to the schools;
Nor was the great museum
Of zoology forgot.

The great testator also
A noble gift bequeathed
To the Deaf and Dumb Asylum,
And the Jewish Conversion fund.

He presented a bell, in addition,
To St. Stephen's new-built spire,
Which, made of the finest metal,
Weighed five-and-twenty tons.

'Tis indeed a bell enormous,
And rings both early and late;
It rings to the honour and glory
Of the man of lasting fame.

It tells with its tongue of iron
The tale of the good he did
To his town and fellow-townsmen,
No matter what their creed.

Mankind's great benefactor,
As in life, thy good deeds all
Shall, in death, be noised and published
By the tongue of the mighty bell!

With solemn pomp and splendour
His body was borne to the grave,
And the folk came crowding after,
Full of respect and awe.

On a black coach lay the coffin,
With a canopy above,
Adorned with nodding bunches
Of thick black ostrich feathers.

It was covered with plates of silver,
And grand with silver lace;
A fine effect had the silver
On the ground of ebon-black.

Six horses drew the carriage,
In housings blackly swathed,
Which fell like cloaks of mourning,
And drooped to the horses' hoofs.

In livery black the servants
Walked slowly after the bier,
Their snow-white handkerchiefs holding
To faces red with grief.

All the townsfolk of position
And of rank, a lengthy train
Of imposing black state coaches,
Drove after, swaying behind.

And, of course, in the mournful procession
The lords of the Council took part;
Only one of their number was missing,
And the missing one was he

Who had shown for pheasant and truffles
Such a weakness. Of recent date
Was his death. The dish had proved fatal.
Indigestion had carried him off.

BERTHA.

SHE seemed so sweet and good, my heart
  Among the angels set her;
She could not even hurt a flower,
  And she wrote a charming letter.

The wedding was near, her kinsfolk heard,
  And they all began to scold her.
Oh, Bertha was a stupid thing:
  Did as aunts and cousins told her.

She broke her pledge, she broke her vow,
  Yet with right good-will I acquit her,
For had we been married I'm sure she'd have made
  My love and life both bitter.

And now when I think on a woman false,
  I think on Bertha faithless;
But I honestly hope, when her child is born,
  She herself may come off scatheless.

IN THE CATHEDRAL.

IT was the sexton's daughter dear
  Who showed me the holy hall.
Her hair was blonde, her figure slight,
  From her neck had slipped her shawl.

For some pence I saw the crosses old,
The candles and tombs of the place;
And then my heart grew suddenly hot—
I looked in Elspeth's face.

I gazed about me, up and down,
And here and there kept glancing;
Hallelujah! High on the painted panes
There are women in petticoats dancing.

The sexton's daughter beside me stood;
What need of a further goal?
She had quite the loveliest pair of eyes,
In which I saw the whole.

It was the sexton's daughter dear
Led me out from the holy hall;
Her mouth was little, her neck was red,
From her bosom had slipped her shawl.

TO BE REMEMBERED.

You must never, never poke
Fun at Philistines, or joke
With a man of narrow mind.
But the big, sagacious heart
Takes a teasing in good part:
Sees the friendship hid behind.

IN A LADY'S ALBUM.

KISSING hands, and bending knees,
Becking, bowing—what are these?
Tricks, illusions, child, that love—
That the heart—thinks nothing of.

THE WILL.

Now that life is nearly spent
I make my will and testament.
The wonder is that long ago
I did not die of pain and woe.

Louisa! Best of womankind,
I leave you twelve old shirts behind,
A hundred fleas, and, what still worse is,
Three hundred times a thousand curses.

The loyal friend who gave so pat
His good advice, and only that,
May now have this advice of mine;—
Marry a pig and bring up swine.

Who would enjoy my faith the most
In Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?
The Rabbi of Posen may draw lots for
My creed with the Chinese emperor.

And German freedom, dream divine—
I leave that bubble superfine
To the censor of Krähwinkel town.
More nutritious by far is rye-bread brown.

The deeds I never did, but planned,
To save my precious Fatherland,
I will leave to the heroes of Baden, I think,
With a cure for the after effects of drink.

I bequeath a night-cap white as chalk
To that cousin who boldly used to talk
Of the Heidschnucker rights, ere wise he grew,
And held his tongue like a Roman true.

I bequeath to the guardian of morals and faith
At Stuttgart, two pistols; he'll take no scathe:
He runs (they're unloaded) no risk of his life,
But he'll always be able to frighten his wife.

I leave a likeness exact and full
Of my trunk to the talented Swabian school;
You refused my face, so it's only right
Some lower thing should refresh your sight.

Twelve bottles of Seidlitz water 's my dole
To the great and noble poet's soul,
Who for years has suffered from song-constipation;
Love, hope, and faith were his consolation.

And the codicil runs: Should all refuse
The legacies mentioned, then I choose
The Roman Catholic Church as heir,
And wash my hands of the whole affair.

TO MY BROTHER MAX.

MAX, although you go from here
To the Steppes of Russia drear,
Every inn provides you pleasure,
All your life's a dancing measure.

At the ball the Gretchen nearest
Always seems the Gretchen dearest;
Drums are beaten, trumpets blow,
Arm round waist, and off you go!

Foaming bumpers red and brown—
You're the man to toss them down;
Give you Bacchus but to swallow,
And you sing like god Apollo.

Luther's motto is your guide:
He who, soured by pious pride,
Loves not women, wine, and song
Lives a fool his whole life long.

Max, your head may Fortune crown,
Pour you bumpers red and brown,
Keep you plied with wine and mirth
In the dance-saloon of earth!

THE VALLEY OF WOE.

In the dark the dormer window shakes
To the piping of the gale;
Two poor souls lie on the garret bed;
They look so thin and pale!

The one poor soul to the other says,
"Oh, take me in your arm,
And closely press your mouth on mine:
Perhaps I shall grow warm."

The other poor soul answers her,
"Dear, when I see your eyes,
Both cold and hunger are forgot,
And earthly sorrow flies."

They moaned, and pressed each other's hands,
They kissed and wept full sore,
And often they laughed and even sang;
And then they spoke no more.

When morning dawned the Commissioner came
With the doctor, who shook his head,
And certified in proper form
That the bodies both were dead.

"An empty stomach," he explained,
"Combined with the bitter weather,
Has caused, or at least has hastened, death—
Hunger and cold together.

"When frost," he continued, "sets in severe,
'Tis the height of hardihood
To sleep without woollen coverlets
And go without wholesome food."

EDWARD.

On the horses weeds of woe,
On the hearse the sable plume;
Failure dogged his steps below;
Now they bear him to the tomb.

He was young, and, like his brothers,
At the festal board of earth
Fain had feasted; but for others,
Not for him, the wine and mirth.

The champagne was poured, and winking
In the glass with pearly gleam;
But he sat, too grave for drinking,
In a melancholy dream.

For a silent sorrow bound him;
In his cup would fall the tear,
While the boon companions round him
Shouted gaily, glad of cheer.

Go to sleep! you'll wake to laughter
In the heavenly halls of light,
Where no headache follows after
The carousals of the night.

THE WHIMS OF THE AMOROUS.

(A True Story, retold from Ancient Documents, and freshly rendered in beautiful German rhyme.)

On the fence the beetle gives many a sigh;
He is head over ears in love with a fly.

"O fly, dearest fly, you're my soul, my life;
It is you, and no other, I've chosen for wife.

"So marry me, fly, and no longer be cold,
My belly is made of the purest gold;

"And a splendid thing is this back of mine,
Where the rubies flame and the emeralds shine."

"Nay now, I am not such a fool!" she said,
"With a beetle I certainly never will wed.

"Gold, rubies, and emeralds tempt me not;
'Tis not wealth that ensures the happiest lot.

"The ideals I yearn for are noble and high;
I am proud, let me tell you—no everyday fly."

The beetle flew off in the deepest distress;
The fly went away to bathe and to dress.

"Now where," said the fly, "is my handmaid, the bee?
I want her to wash and to wait upon me.

"And to stroke down my delicate skin, beside,
For I'm soon to be made a beetle's bride.

"And truly this beetle is quite a catch;
I doubt if the world contains his match.

"Yes, his coat's of a really splendid design:
Its rubies flame and its emeralds shine.

"His belly is gold, and distinguished his mien,
Oh, many blue-bottles will die of spleen.

"So curl my hair, little bee, and make haste;
And perfume me nicely and draw in my waist.

"Come, rub me with attar of roses sweet,
And lavender oil pour over my feet,

"That no odour unpleasant may spoil my charms
When I lovingly rest in my bridegroom's arms.

"Already come dragon-flies blue and gay,
As maids of honour their homage to pay.

"In the bridal wreath that's soon to be mine
The white orange blossom they'll deftly twine.

"Musicians I've asked, and cicadas proud
Will provide us with songs both merry and loud.

"Drone, hornet, and gadfly and bittern come
To blow with the trumpet, and beat on the drum.

"At the wedding-feast each will perform his best;
Already comes many a bright-winged guest.

"They're arriving in families merry and gay—
The commoner insects are crowding the way—

"The grasshoppers, wasps, with their aunts and cousins,
To the blowing of bugles, they're coming in dozens.

"And the parson, the mole, in his black robe of state,
Has appeared on the scene; 'tis already late.

"Ding-dong, ding-dong, the bells ring clear—
Oh, what can be keeping my bridegroom dear?"

Ding-dong, ding-dong, the bells ring gay,
But the beetle in sorrow has flown away.

Ding-dong, ding-dong, the bells ring clear;
"Oh, what can be keeping my bridegroom dear?"

But the bridegroom has gone to grieve alone;
On a distant dunghill he makes his moan.

There he sat seven years, the world forgotten,
Till the poor little bride was dead and rotten.

THE VIRTUOUS DOG.

A POODLE after Brutus named—
Appropriately too—was famed
Throughout the land from end to end
For his wisdom, and virtue that none could bend.
He was patient, and modest, and never rude:
A model, indeed, of behaviour good.

One heard him everywhere praised to the skies
As a sort of four-footed Nathan the wise.
A gem of a dog one was forced to extol,
So honest and true! a beautiful soul!

His master trusted him out and out:
To the butcher sent him with never a doubt.
The noble dog refused to roam:
Came conscientiously trotting home,
In his mouth the basket neatly packed
With mutton and beef, and pork well hacked.
Though the greasy odours might tempt and lure,
Not a bone but with Brutus was quite secure.
With stoical calm, towards his abode
He steadily pressed with his costly load.

But, of course, among dogs there will always be
A sprinkling of curs of low degree—
'Tis the same with ourselves—decoys afoot,
Rogues, idlers, and many an envious brute
Who cannot appreciate moral pleasure,
And squander their life in sensual leisure.
Such rascals had sworn to attempt to undo
Poor Brutus, the valiant and wise and true,
Who, basket in mouth, his master served,
And from duty's pathway had never swerved.

And so it happened that, one fine day,
As he steadily trudged on his homeward way,

The wretched, vile, conspiring horde
Made an onslaught grim with one accord.
They seized on the basket that held the meat,
And scattered the tit-bits on the street;
And the plunder thus gained, without more ado,
Was fallen upon by the ravenous crew.
With his dog-philosopher's soul serene
Stood Brutus at first regarding the scene;
But when he perceived every gluttonous beast
Devouring so gaily the stolen feast,
He thought he had better have some for his own,
And dined himself on a mutton bone.

MORAL.

"Thou too! Thou eatest, my Brutus upright!"
The moralist sighs at the sorrowful sight.
Yes, a bad example can ruin us all;
Like the other mammals who sin and fall,
The virtuous dog is not exempted
From imperfection—he eats when tempted!

HORSE AND ASS.

On its iron road, with lightning speed
The train goes thundering past;
The murky smoke from the chimney streams,
Like a pennant from a mast.

A farmyard lay beside the line;
  The white horse heard the whistle,
And craned his neck above the fence;
  The donkey ate a thistle.

The white horse followed the vanishing train
  With a glassy eye and drear;
Then he trembled in every limb, and said,
  "Alas! I'm convulsed with fear.

"Indeed, had I not by nature's choice
  Already been coloured white,
My coat had been certainly bleached to-day
  By that hateful and terrible sight.

"The whole of the equine race is doomed
  By relentless Fate's decree;
Although I am white, a future black
  Awaits both mine and me.

"This rivalry soon will kill us all,
  From the greatest horse to the least;
When man is forced to drive or ride,
  He'll use the iron beast.

"And when he finds that without a horse
  He still can ride and drive,
Farewell to hay, farewell to oats!
  Then how shall we keep alive?

"The heart of man is as hard as a stone;
He gives but to get as good;
He will chase us away from our stables warm;
We shall die for want of food.

"We cannot borrow, we cannot steal,
Like mortals whose morals are blacker;
Nor cringe and fawn like men and dogs.
Ah me! we shall end with the knacker."

So the horse, lamenting, deeply sighed,
While long-ear, quite untroubled,
Possessed his soul in peace serene,
And his diet of thistles doubled.

He licked his nose with his tongue, and said
In an easy and tranquil way,
"Because of the future, I see no need
To rack my brains to-day.

"You horses proud are threatened, indeed,
With a truly terrible morrow;
For us humble asses there's nothing in store
To call for foreboding or sorrow.

"Yes, men can dispense with the piebald horse,
With the white and the black and the roan,
But against Jack Steam and his chimneys too
The asses can hold their own.

"No matter how cleverly forged and strong
The machines that men contrive,
The asses can always be perfectly sure
Of enough to keep them alive.

"Yes, Heaven those asses will always protect,
Whom dutiful sentiments fill,
And who do as their decent fathers did,
And daily trudge to the mill.

"The mill-wheel rattles, the miller grinds,
And pours into sacks the flour;
I bear these sacks to the baker, who bakes
The bread that men devour.

"Whatever betide, the world will turn
In the old primeval way,
And unchanging and fixed, like Nature herself,
The ass will endure for aye."

MORAL.

The days of chivalry are dead;
The noble horse must go unfed;
But the lowly ass will escape disaster,
And never want for meal or master.

BODY AND SOUL.

THE poor soul to the body saith,
"I will not leave thee; down to death
And dismal night I too will sink,
And of annihilation drink.
A second self I found in thee;
With love thou hast encircled me,
Warm as a satin gala gown,
Lined through with ermine soft as down.
Naked and abstract now, alas!
Without a body I must pass,
And as a blessed nothing stray
About the realm of light for aye:
Tread the cold halls of heaven high,
While, yawning in my face, file by
The dumb eternities. How slow
Their leaden slippers clattering go.
Oh, horrible and hateful lot!
Beloved body, leave me not!"

To the poor soul the body saith,
"Nay, grieve not so because of death.
We must endure and calmly wait
Whatever is decreed by Fate.
I was the wick, and must consume;
But thou, the spirit, shalt illume

With purest radiance heaven afar,
A lovely and a chosen star.
I am but worthless trash: mere humble
And senseless matter. I shall crumble
Like rotten tinder, and decay
To what I sprang from—lifeless clay.
Be comforted, and fare thee well!
Perhaps in heaven—who can tell?—
'Tis not so dismal after all.
The Great Bear in yon starry hall
(Not Meyer-Beer) if thou shouldst see,
Greet him a thousand times from me!"

RED SLIPPERS.

THE wicked cat was old and grey,
And a shoemaker too, or so she would say;
And before the window, in proof of the fact
Stood a case with maidens' slippers packed.
There were slippers of fine morocco leather
And slippers of satin ranged together,
And velvet slippers she also sold,
With gay-flowered ribbons and borders of gold.
But the prettiest slippers of any there
Was an exquisite little scarlet pair.
The gorgeous colour had played its part,
And laughed its way into many a heart.

A young and white little high-born mouse,
Who was going along by the shoemaker's house,
Turned back when she saw them, and stood stock-
still,
And then she peeped over the window-sill.
At length she spoke out, "Good day, Mistress Cat,
You have pretty red slippers—no doubt about that.
If they're not too dear, they are really so nice,
I think I will buy them, so tell me the price."

The cat was delighted, and cried, at this,
"I respectfully beg you to enter, miss.
With your presence pray honour this house of
mine:
I deal with society ladies fine,
The loveliest damsels shop with me,
And duchesses, too, of high degree.
For the merest song the slippers I'll sell—
But come, let us see if they fit you well—
Be so good as to enter and take a seat."

The cunning old cat had a voice so sweet!
And the little white ignorant mouse, unaware,
Walked into the murderer's den and snare;
Sat down on a settle with never a doubt,
And her neat little leg stretched gaily out,
In order to see how the red shoes fitted—
An example of innocent trust to be pitied.

Then the cruel cat suddenly seized her tight
And mangled and tore her and killed her outright,
And bit off her poor little harmless head.
"My dear little, white little thing, you are dead,
Yes, dead as a mouse!" the old cat cried;
"But the scarlet slippers I'll lay outside
The spot where you're buried; and when from the tomb
You are called, by the awful trump of doom,
To the last great dance, you'll wake, white mouse,
And rise from the grave, your deep, dark house:
Like everyone else you'll leave your bed,
And then you will draw on your slippers red."

MORAL.

Ye little white mice, beware! beware!
The splendour of earth is a lure and a snare.
Oh, better—far better—be barefoot trippers
Than go to the cat to buy your slippers.

THE DRAGON-FLY.

On the waves of the brook she dances by,
The light, the lovely dragon-fly;
She dances here, she dances there,
The shimmering, glimmering flutterer fair.

And many a foolish young beetle's impressed
By the blue gauze gown in which she is dressed;
They admire the enamel that decks her bright,
And her elegant waist so slim and slight.

And many's the beetle that after her flits
Till he loses his poor little beetle-wits,
Hums of love and of truth, and undaunted avers
That Brabant and Holland shall both be hers.

The beautiful dragon-fly laughs; says she,
"Brabant and Holland are nothing to me.
But hasten, ye wooers—for this I desire—
And fetch me a tiny spark of fire.

"The cook's had a baby, she's lying in bed,
So, of course, I must cook the supper instead,
The coals on the hearth have gone out, so away!
And fetch me a spark of fire, I pray."

The words of the false one are scarcely uttered,
When off at top speed the beetles have fluttered.
They search for the fire till their home-woods kind
Are many and many a league behind.

They go till they come where a candle gleams,
From a garden bower the radiance streams,
And the lovers impetuous, blind and rash,
Right into the flame of the candle dash.

The candle crackles, as candles do,
The beetles are burnt, and their loving hearts too.
And some of them perish entirely, poor things!
And others get off with the loss of their wings.

Oh, woe to the beetle whose wings are burnt!
He is forced to do what he never has learnt;
In a foreign land he must crawl like a worm,
Where clammy and noisome insects squirm.

"Bad company"—so you can hear him complain—
"Is exile's hardest and bitterest bane;
We're obliged to consort with companions mean,
With vermin, and even with bugs unclean.

"They treat us as comrades, ignoring our pride,
Because we must wade in the mire by their side.
From the pupil of Virgil the same complaint fell:
The poet who wrote about exile and hell.

"I think with regret of the time so fair,
When I fluttered about in the happy home air,
And in all the splendour of wings undocked,
On the golden sunflowers merrily rocked.

"From the heart of the rose I sucked my food,
I was haughty and grand, and mixed when I would
With the noble-souled butterflies; also could claim
As my friend the cicada of artist fame.

"But my wings are gone; I can never return
To the Fatherland dear for which I yearn.
I am only a worm; I cannot fly:
On this foreign dung I must rot and die.

"If only, alas! I had never met
The dragon-fly bright, the blue coquette,
With her waist so slim and neat—
The fair, the faithless cheat!"

THE DRAGON-FLY.

(ANOTHER VERSION.)

'Tis the dragon-fly, the blue one;
She's the prettiest person in beetle-land,
The butterflies court her on every hand,
And every lover's a true one.

Her hips are rounded so neatly;
She wears a gauzy gown with wings,
And with regular, rhythmic grace she swings
In the air so saucily, sweetly.

Her gaily-hued worshippers hover
Wherever she goes, and many a youth
Swears, "Holland, Brabant shall be thine in good sooth,
If only thou'lt take me for lover."

The dragon-fly fibs—she is weary—
"For Brabant and Holland I've no desire,
What I really want is a spark of fire
To make my parlour cheery."

The lovers, as bound in duty,
Before she has ended are off on the chase,
And busily seeking, from place to place,
A spark of fire for the beauty.

Comes one where a candle is burning,
As if blind and mad his body he'll fling
Right into the flame, till he's burnt, poor thing!
Both he and his heart so yearning.

The fable is Japanese, dear;
But trust me, my child, for I tell you true,
In Germany here there are dragon-flies too,
And false as the Devil are these, dear.

MIMI.

"THERE are common cats and quiet,
In their parlours who sit spinning;
I was never one; I wander
On the house-tops, free and sinning.

"And on summer nights, when yearning
In the air so cool and healing,
Music growls in me and rumbles,
And I sing with genuine feeling."

So says Mimi. From her bosom
Come the bridal raptures swelling,
And the bachelors about her
Seem to find them most compelling.

For they crowd around her, purring
In the same peculiar fashion,
And they join in Mimi's music
All aglow with love and passion.

They're no virtuosi venal;
And no lust of money jostles
With their reverence for music—
They're the holy art's apostles.

They themselves are flute and fiddle:
Need no instruments, no poses;
For the drums they have their bellies,
And for trumpets have their noses.

They are singing now in chorus,
And the fugues, when one has listened,
Are of Guido of Arezzo,
Or of Bach quite reminiscent.

Frantic symphonies, caprices
  Like Beethoven's ones, or harder,
Or like Berlioz' productions,
  Only fiercer in their ardour.

Oh, the wondrous might of music!
  Oh, unequalled notes of magic!
Even heaven shakes and trembles,
  And the stars look pale and tragic.

And her cloudy veil Selina
  Draws, and hides her fair face under,
When she hears the sounds enchanting,
  When she hears the notes of wonder.

Prima Donna Philomela—
  Only she, so fond of blaming,
Turns her nose up—heartless creature—
  And at Mimi sniffs, defaming.

But they all continue, careless
  Of the spleen of the Signora,
Till at last on the horizon
  Smiles the rosy fay, Aurora.

GOOD ADVICE.

BANISH sorrow, courage borrow,
Loudly ask and boldly woo;
They'll respect you more to-morrow,
And the bride will be for you.

'Tis the fiddle makes the revel;
Pay the fiddlers; do not miss,
Though you wish them with the Devil,
Every aunt-in-law to kiss.

For all princes twine the laurel,
Of a woman speak no ill;
With your puddings do not quarrel,
When a pig you come to kill.

Hate the church, but do not grumble;
Go the oftener for that;
Send the pastor wine; be humble;
And in passing lift your hat.

Bear a flea-bite without flinching:
Scratch contented till it's gone,
If your shoes are tight, and pinching—
Well, just draw your slippers on.

If your soup is spoilt completely
By an overdose of salt,
Say, "My darling," smiling sweetly,
"What you cook's without a fault."

For a shawl your wife is pining?
Buy her two instead of one;
Buy her lace, and spangles shining,
Jewels also, and be done.

The advice which I have given,
You have only got to try it;
You will one day go to heaven,
And on earth you'll live in quiet.

GOOD ADVICE.

When writing fables, it is best
To give your hero's real name.
You suffer more when it's suppressed;
A dozen hoary fools will claim
To be the donkey of the poem,
And cry, "Those ears are mine; I know 'em!
Also the horrid, hideous braying—
That is my voice, there's no gainsaying!
I am the ass! Though names disguise me,
My Fatherland will recognise me,

My Fatherland, Germania!
I am the ass! Hee-ha! Hee-ha!"
In the attempt one fool to screen,
You've made a dozen mad with spleen.

THE ASS-ELECTION.

FREEDOM can pall like other things;
The brute republic found it,
And resolved henceforth to be ruled by kings,
By autocrats unbounded.

To the poll every species of animal came;
The voting papers were written,
And party spirit began to flame:
Not a beast but was intrigue-bitten.

On the asses' committee the old ones sat,
And every long-eared dullard
Went sporting a favour of black-red-gold—
They wore them *party*-coloured.

The horse had a following faithful and true,
But so small that it never voted;
They stood in such fear of the terrible din
Of the long-ears brazen-throated.

When at last some one ventured to name the horse
For the post of future dictator,
An angry old long-ear cut short his discourse
With cries of "Shame!" and "Traitor!"

"O traitor!" he shouted, "I'm certain no drop
Of ass's blood makes you my brother;
I believe you're an alien, neck and crop,
And were foaled by a foreign mother.

"Perhaps you inherit a zebra strain;
Your skin is striped and shows it;
Or you bear the Egypto-Jewish stain:
From your nasal twang one knows it.

"But, foreign or not, you're an ass alone
In intellect shallow; our serious
And profounder side you never have known,
Nor our psaltery's charm mysterious.

"Now, my soul's in that music—in every wail
And hee-ha! re-echoing sweetly;
I'm an ass in each separate hair of my tail;
Oh yes, I'm an ass completely.

"No papist am I, no wretched slave—
The very thought makes me bristle.
I'm a German ass; like my fathers I'm brave
And thoughtful, and fond of a thistle.

"Loose gallantries never were much in their line,
Nor frivolous vices; ungrudging,
With the sack to the mill, come shade, come shine,
Every day they went patiently trudging.

"Our fathers, they are not dead! To the dust
Their carcasses only were given—
Their mortal bodies—with pleasure and trust
They gaze on us down from heaven.

"O asses celestial, in aureoles bright!
Like you we will never linger,
Nor stray from the pathway of duty and right
By so much as the breadth of a finger.

"To be born an ass! Oh, the rapture high
From such long-eared sires to inherit!
I was born an ass! I should like to cry
And bray from each roof my merit!

"The noble ass whom I thank for my birth
Was of German stock and no other;
With pure ass's milk upon German earth
I was fed by a German mother.

"I'm a donkey indeed, and will faithfully hold,
As long as the grass the grass is,
To the ancient ways of my fathers old,
To the customs and cult of the asses.

"And because I'm an ass I counsel you thus:
Choose an ass for your monarch glorious.
A great ass-realm will be founded by us,
Where the ass shall rule victorious.

"We are all of us asses! Hee-ha! Hee-ha!
And no horses of lowly station.
Down, down with the horses! Hurrah! Hurrah!
For the king of the great ass-nation!"

Thus the patriot spoke. Every ass in the hall
Acclaimed the speaker proudly;
The asses had national leanings all,
And stamped with their ass-hoofs loudly.

With oak they have crowned the orator's brow—
A highly popular measure;
He is dumb with emotion: can only bow,
And wag his ass-tail for pleasure.

THE DAYS OF THE TIE-WIG.

(FABLE.)

At Cassel two rats fared badly,
They had nothing to eat, and sadly

They gazed at each other, hungry-eyed;
Then one of the rats, she whispered and sighed,

"I know of some millet pap in a pan,
But a sentinel guards it, wretched man!

"He wears the Electoral uniform, too,
And his hair is tied in a monstrous queue.

"His musket is loaded with shot, 'tis said,
And whoever approaches, he shoots him dead."

The other rat whispered, and ground
Her teeth with a gnawing sound.

"His Electoral Highness wisdom displays,
In as much as he loves the good old days,

"The times when the Katten of yore
Their queer long tie-wigs wore.

"They rivalled our tails, they grew
Such a curiously lengthy queue.

"The tie-wig is only the image in art
Of the tail which Nature made ours from the start.

"The rat, the privileged creature,
Has the tail as a natural feature.

"You, O Prince, who disdained not to fuss
Over Katten, must surely love us.

"Your heart for us rats should warmly beat
Since with tails at our birth we were fashioned complete.

"O noble Philosopher! Sensible man!
Come, give us the run of your millet pan.

"Yes, give us, for nothing, the pap in your pot,
And dismiss the sentry who guards the spot!

"In return for the pap and your favour royal,
We will serve you for evermore, loving and loyal;

"And when you are dead, to your grave we'll go,
And cut off our tails with genuine woe.

"To a garland we'll twine them, to swell your renown;
Of the tail of a rat be your laurel crown!"

THE BUG.

I.

THERE sat on a penny a common brown bug;
Like a bloated capitalist pompous and smug
He lolled and he sprawled, and he said, "If you've gold
You are honoured on earth, and your name is extolled.

The man who has money is handsome and pleasing,
No woman withstands him, no matter how freezing.
Why, women, they tremble: grow paler than death:
If they feel but so much as the smell of my breath.
Oh, many a night has been spent, I can vouch,
In comfort by me on the queen's own couch.
On her mattress she tossed, and could not refrain
From scratching and scratching and scratching again!"

A finch came along—a bit of a wag—
Who was greatly incensed when he heard him brag.
He sharpened his bill and began to whistle
A song on the insect, with satire for missile.

But the bug took a vengeance dirty and low,
In the manner of bugs, for bugs are so.
He said that the finch at his cost was funny
Because he refused to lend him money.

"And the moral?" you ask. I have noticed, of late,
That the moral the fabulist prudently shelves,
For vermin, when rich, though small in themselves,
Have powerful allies among the great.
Each sits on his money-bag, pompous and smug,
The Dessau march drumming, a glorious bug.

II.

The insects unclean made a Holy Alliance
All over the earth, for defence and defiance;
More especially bugs who had musical fancies,
And foolish composers of wretched romances,
(Like the Schlesinger clock they none of them go,)
Made a league universal for weal or for woe.
In Vienna the itch has its famous Mozart—
The pearl of pawnbrokers given to art—
Who with Meyerbeer—him of the laurel crown,
The mighty Maestro of Berlin town—
Intrigues, and some articles shortly appear,
Which a leaf-louse, one of the allies dear,
Through the press (ready money paid) hastily smuggles—
He crawls and he cringes, he lies and he juggles,
And suffers from deep melancholia, too.
The public will often give ready belief
To a lie, out of pity: the hypocrite's grief
On his features is written for all to view.
Now how should you act when thus wronged? Hold your tongue,
And endure all the calumnies. Try to be meek.
You dare not complain of them: dare not speak;
For, of course, if you tramp on the verminous dung,

You will poison with stench the sweet, clean air,
And be forced on your shoes the filth to bear.
Yes, silence is best—Some more opportune time
I will tell you the moral to draw from my rhyme.

KING LONG-EAR I.

WHEN an animal king was elected, of course
The asses appeared in the greatest force.
So an ass was chosen, the Chronicle states;
But now you must hear what it further relates.

As soon as the ass was crowned, we are told,
He imagined he looked like a lion bold.
He wrapped himself round with a lion's skin,
And bellowed with loud and leonine din.
He hobnobbed with horses—his pride was such—
Which the slighted old asses resented much.
Of wolves and of bull-dogs his army was formed;
And the asses at this yet more fiercely stormed.
Then an ox was made chancellor—conduct so bad
That they snorted with rage and went almost mad.
They threatened a rising: so far matters went;
But the king, when he heard of their discontent,
Stuck the crown on his head, and wriggled inside
A brave and imposing lion's hide.

Then he ordered that all the seditious band
Should be summoned before his throne to stand;
And he spoke to them thus with his royal tongue:
"O puissant asses, both old and young!
Ye imagine that I am an ass like you,
But you grievously err: I'm a lion true.
By none at my court is this fact gainsaid,
From the high-born dame, to the serving-maid.
My laureate also has written a song,
With me for its theme, which proves you wrong:
'As the camel inherits its hump, your soul
Has inherited clearly, for all to extol,
The lion's magnanimous nature; no part
Have the asinine ears in your Majesty's heart!'
'Tis thus he sings in his lines inspired;
At my court the verses are much admired,
For they love me. The peacocks most haughtily bred
Dispute for the honour of scratching my head.
I foster the arts: deny it can none;
I'm Mæcenas and Cæsar Augustus in one.
I've a fine Court Theatre, too, where all
The heroic parts to the tom-cat fall;
While Mistress Tabby, the poppet sweet,
And a score of pugs the troupe complete.
A Painting Academy, also, I've founded,
For asses of genius, whose number's unbounded.

I have as its worthy director *in petto*
The Raphael famed of the Hamburg ghetto;
Yes the Dreckwall Lehmann shall fill that position;
I will get him to paint me—a noble commission.
An opera, too, and a ballet are mine,
Where, almost half-naked, coquettish and fine,
The loveliest birds twitter gaily and sing,
And fleas of remarkable talent spring.
My orchestra-leader is Herr Meyerbeer,
The wonderful musical millionaire.
The mighty maestro's composing a play
To be duly performed on my wedding day.
I'm a musical amateur, too, I may state,
Like the monarch of Prussia, Frederick the Great.
The instrument honoured by him was the flute,
While I have a preference strong for the lute.
And many sweet eyes with a yearning light
Are filled when the passionate strings I smite.
With what rapture one day will the queen discover
That she's blest with a musical spouse and lover.
She herself is a thoroughbred mare from a stud
Of the highest descent and the bluest blood.
She's related by kinship quite close, indeed,
To the proud Rosinante, Don Quixote's steed;
While her genealogical tree proves plain
She inherits no less of the Bayard strain.
And many a stallion from whom she's descended
Rode whinnying under the banner splendid

Of Godfrey de Bouillon, the knight of renown
Who by force of arms conquered the holy town.
'Tis by beauty, however, she shines above all.
When she tosses her mane, and I hear her call
And snort with her rosy nostrils, a burning
And rapturous joy fills my heart with yearning.
She's the flower of mares, no better is known,
And she'll give me an heir to sit on my throne.
Indispensable quite this alliance, you see,
To the dynasty high that shall date from me.
My name and my fame will never decline:
In the annals of Clio will always shine;
That powerful goddess will ever attest
That the heart of a lion I bore in my breast,
That wisely I governed—which none will refute—
And will bear witness, too, to my skill on the lute."

Here the king stopped to belch: for a moment was dumb,
Then continued his speech: there was more to come.

"Ye puissant asses, both young and old!
My favour and grace I will not withhold
So long as ye prove yourselves worthy, and pay
The taxes ye owe me without delay,
And in virtue's path without a stumble,
Like your fathers, walk, contented and humble.

The honest old asses! Through frost and heat
They trudged to the mill with the corn and wheat,
As taught by religion, nor needed compelling—
They never so much as dreamed of rebelling.
From their thick lips no murmurs escaped: the danger
They understood well, and from custom's safe manger
They tranquilly munched at their innocent hay,
But alas! the old times are vanished for aye.
Ye latter-day asses are asses, indeed,
But humility seems to be lost to the breed.
Your tails ye still abjectly wag to and fro,
But arrogance haughty is lurking below.
Though people conclude from your imbecile mien
You're the honest old asses they always have seen,
You are false, you are wicked—true gospel I speak—
In spite of your assdom so servile and meek.
Were one to put pepper now under your tail,
Your ass-lute would strike up its hideous wail,
You would want to make mince-meat of all within reach,
And would only be able to bray and to screech.
Mad passion that counts not the cost, when stirred—
Mere impotent anger—is only absurd.
Your bray idiotic proves nothing to me,
Save how tricky and artful your malice can be,

And that wickedness vile of the loathsomest kind,
And imbecile abjectness foolish and blind,
And cunning and gall and poison and sin
Can be hidden away 'neath an ass's skin."

Here the king stopped to belch: for a moment was dumb:
Then continued his speech: there was more to come.

"O puissant asses of every age,
Ye perceive how truly your minds I gauge.
I am greatly annoyed—my disgust's immense—
That your really disgraceful lack of sense
Should have brought discredit upon my rule.
From the ass point of view—which is that of a fool—
'Twas impossible quite you could understand
My lion-ideas and policy grand.
But I warn you, beware! Do not fancy I joke!
In my kingdom grows many a beech and oak,
Which my carpenters fashion to gallows fine,
And excellent sticks. I advise you, confine
Your thoughts to yourselves; I counsel it strongly:
Discuss not my government, rightly or wrongly.
The impious praters who argue and reason
Shall be publicly flogged by the hangman for treason,
Or to card wool in jail they'll be sent, on detection;
And if any's so bold as to talk insurrection,

And barricades (tearing up streets in the city!)
He'll be hanged out of hand without favour or pity.
I desired to impress you with this, and explain,
And now you may trundle off homewards again."

When the king his sentiments thus had voiced,
The asses, both old and young, rejoiced,
And shouted together, "Hee-ha! Hee-ha!
Long live the king! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

THE ROVING RATS.

AMONG rats you only find
The full and the famished kind.
The full ones stay in peace at home,
And the hungry ones go forth and roam.

Many thousand miles they wander;
They pause not to rest or ponder;
They speed in a grim unswerving track;
Neither wind nor rain can hold them back.

Over the hills they go,
And they swim the lakes below.
Some break their necks and some are drowned,
And the sick are left behind by the sound.

Each queer old fellow sticks out
An ugly, horrible snout,
And their heads are shaven, like radicals', flat;
Indeed they are all as bald as a rat.

These radicals ugly and odd,
Know nothing whatever of God,
Their children are never baptized. That their mating
Is a matter promiscuous hardly needs stating.

The material rat only thinks
Of what he eats and drinks.
He quite forgets, while drinking and eating,
That the soul is immortal, and time is fleeting.

So also the wild she-rat,
She fears neither hell nor cat.
No goods and no gold she possesses—her view
Is that earth should be parcelled out anew.

The wandering rats, alack!
Are already close. The pack
Is swarming and squeaking here, in our region;
They come, they come, and their number's legion.

Ah, woe is me! we are lost!
At the very gate stands the host.
The mayor, the senators—helpless crew—
They shake their heads: it is all they can do.

The citizens fly to arms,
The priests peal out alarms,
For property's threatened and toppling down—
Palladium dear to the orderly town.

But the ringing of bells, and the prayer of the priest,
And a senate's wise laws will not help in the least;
Your hundred-pounders, your cannons may volley—
You will find them, my children, the merest folly.

And likewise vain, now your fortunes ebb,
Is the lifeless art of the word-spun web.
For rats are not caught by snares syllogistic:
All your quibbles they'll jump—the most subtly sophistic.

Yes, hungry bellies will only seize on
The logic of soup, and a dumpling-reason,
And the arguments offered by roast-beef orations,
When strewn, say, with Göttingen-sausage-quotations.

To these radicals, finer than all you could utter
Is a good dried cod that's been boiled in butter.
No orator born since great Cicero's time,
Not Mirabeau even, is half so sublime.

THE JUNIOR CAT-CLUB FOR POETIC MUSIC.

THE philharmonic cat-club met
Upon the roof to-night;
But not for rowdy, romping love,
And amorous delight.

The wedding dreams of summer warm,
The songs by lovers chosen,
Suit not with winter, frost and snow,
When every runnel's frozen.

Besides, the cats were 'neath the spell
Of strivings strange and new;
The young tom-cat is all aglow
For earnestness more true.

A generation frivolous
Is passing; and an urging:
A cat springtide of poetry:
In art and life is surging.

The philharmonic club reverts
To the primitive again:
To the youthful, downy-lipped, naïve
Unstudied, artless strain.

They want poetic music now,
Roulades without a trill;
Instrumental and vocal poetry,
Where music shall be *nil.*

They hold that genius is supreme,
Which, though it trips at times,
To the ladder's very highest rung
Unconscious often climbs.

They honour genius that, unspoilt,
From Nature has not turned:
On knowledge does not plume itself—
Which, in fact, has nothing learned.

Such is the programme of the club;
Of this aspiration full,
On the roof to-night it gave the first
Of its winter concerts cool.

But the execution of the plan
Was a truly sad affair—
Go, hang yourself, friend Berlioz,
Because you were not there.

'Twas a charivari—it might have been
Some frantic gallopade
Three dozen pipers, roaring drunk,
Upon the bagpipes played.

'Twas as formless as if all the beasts
On Noah's ark afloat,
Had started chorussing the Flood
With a single heart and throat.

What a yowling, howling hullabaloo!
What a bawling, squalling din!
The chimneys take up the sacred song:
With a snort and a puff join in!

One voice you can hear above the rest—
A shrill, a tired and a bad one;
It reminds one somehow of Sontag's voice,
Before she no longer had one.

What a concert wild! The Te Deum was sung,
And considered quite in season
As a pæan of praise for the victory gained
By impious folly o'er reason.

Or the club perhaps, for aught I know
Was rehearsing the opera grand
By Hungary's greatest pianist
For Charenton Madhouse planned.

* * *

A REMINISCENCE OF HAMMONIA.

Lo! they pass by two, by three,
Orphans happy as can be;
In their dresses blue they go,
All their little cheeks aglow—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

That the sight is one to move,
Jingling money-boxes prove.
Many a secret father's hand
Opens wide at the demand—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

Women too, so full of feeling,
Find the hapless things appealing;
Mouth and dirty nose they kiss,
Showering bags of sugar-bliss—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

In the box the usurer shy
Drops a dollar, passing by,
For he has a heart, and brighter
Jogs along for pocket lighter.
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

Now a louis-d'or is given
By a pious man. At heaven
First a glance you see him snatching,
Just to know if God is watching—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

Coopers, porters, baggage-humpers,
Work-folk all, they drain their bumpers—
Mark the day by emptying glasses
To the little lads and lasses—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

And Hammonia walks behind,
Tutelary goddess kind;
Her proportions vast appear
Proudly bringing up the rear—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

On a field without the gate,
High in spangled, pennoned state,
Stands a tent, where music sweet
Charms the senses; here they eat—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

Here they sit in endless rows,
Sup their soup, and then dispose
Of the tarts and cakes, like mice
Nibbling at the tit-bits nice—
Oh, the pretty orphan children!

But, alas! I think with sadness
On an orphanage where gladness
To the guests is little known;
Yonder miserably moan
Many million orphan children:

Where no uniform is worn,
And where dinnerless, forlorn,
Desolation in each heart,
Wander, weary and apart,
Many million orphan children.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

FAIR woman's body is a song,
The Lord, He did indite it:
In Nature's album wrote it down
As He was moved to write it.

'Twas made in a propitious hour:
Inspired the Lord was truly;
With what a master-hand He shaped
The stubborn stuff unruly!

The song of songs, beyond compare,
Is woman's body tender;
Her limbs are strophes exquisite,
So warm and white and tender.

And what a heavenly motion, too,
This dainty neck and shining
On which the curly head is poised—
A triumph of designing!

* * *

The song has flesh and blood and bones,
No abstract poem this is—
Has hands and feet; with rhythmic mouth
It even laughs and kisses.

It breathes the truest poetry,
Its grace needs no correction;
Yea, on its brow it bears the seal
Of absolute perfection.

Lord, in the dust I will adore,
And praise with awe and wonder!
Compared with Thee, the heavenly bard,
How foolishly we blunder!

Before the splendour of Thy song
I'll sink in adoration,
And to its study will devote
The closest application.

I will not lose a single hour,
  Nor ever dream of shirking;
And, if I'm not the man I was—
  'Twill come of overworking.

THE SUTLER'S SONG.

(FROM "THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.")

I FONDLY love the gay hussars:
  I love them very dearly;
I love the yellow, love the brown,
  I love them all sincerely.

I fondly love the musketeers,
  With all my heart I love them;
The young, the old, the rank and file,
  The officers above them.

I love them all, the horse, the foot,
  For surely none are braver;
And also the artillery
  Have often known my favour.

I love the Germans, love the French,
  Italians, too, and Dutchmen;
Bohemians, Spaniards, Swedes—for charm,
  There's nothing that can touch men.

I care not what their country is,
A fig for creed and party!
A man is always dear to me,
If only hale and hearty.

Religion and the Fatherland—
They're merely clothes that cover.
Strip off the husk! the man beneath
Is what I want for lover.

I'm human: to humanity
Devote myself with pleasure;
And those who cannot pay at once
Can pay me at their leisure.

How merry in the sunlight laughs
The wreath my tent adorning!
To-day the drink is Malmsey wine—
I tapped a butt this morning.

A PAIR OF PICKPOCKETS.

WHILE on the couch I sat enraptured
In Laura's arms, the wily fox,
Her husband, busy at my box,
My bank-notes with adroitness captured.

Now here I stand, my pockets rifled!
Was Laura's kiss but falsehood masked?
Ah, what is truth? So Pilate asked,
And washed his hands while truth was stifled.

This wicked world that is so rotten
And so depraved I soon must leave.
The man who's poor is, I perceive,
Half dead already and forgotten.

To you, ye spirits pure and leal,
My heart yearns upward with desire.
You, in your realms of light, require
So little, that ye need not steal.

HANS LACKLAND.

"FAREWELL, my wife," said Lackland Hans,
"High aims allure and beckon;
I go to shoot at other bucks,
On nobler sport I reckon.

"I leave to you my hunting-horn,
And you can tootle suavely,
To pass the time; you learned at home
To blow the post-horn bravely.

"I also leave my dog behind
To keep my house securely,
The Germans, with a poodle's faith,
Will guard me well and surely.

"They offer me the Kaiser's throne—
They are not merely joking—
They wear my portrait on their breasts,
And on their pipes when smoking.

"You Germans are a mighty folk,
So simple yet superior;
That you invented powder, none
Would guess from your exterior.

"I'll make you happy—not as king,
But father, elder brother.
Oh, glorious thought! I feel as proud
As was the Gracchi's mother.

"Yes, by the heart and not the head
I'll rule a realm adoring.
Diplomacy is not my forte,
And policy is boring.

"As child of Nature, hunter free,
I've trod the forest mazes;
With snipe and chamois, buck and sow,
I spin no subtle phrases.

"Your proclamations I disdain,
And scorn your printed gammon!
I'll say, 'My people, dine on cod;
To-day there is no salmon.

"'And if I do not please you, choose
The likeliest fool to lead you.
In the Tyrol I did not starve;
I neither want nor need you.'

"'Tis thus I'll speak. But now, my wife,
Farewell—no time for prating.
Your father's steeds are at the door,
And the postillion's waiting.

"Quick! reach me down my travelling-cap;
Its band is black-red-golden.
You'll see me soon a kaiser crowned,
In royal robes and olden.

"You'll see me in the Pluvial,
The purple mantle glorious
Which the Sultan of the Saracens
Gave Otto the victorious;

"With the Dalmatic underneath,
Where beasts of fabled seeming
With lions and with camels march,
All bright with jewels gleaming.

"I'll wear the stole upon my breast:
The stole embroidered duly
On a yellow ground with eagles black—
A handsome costume truly.

"Farewell! As king, posterity
Will laud me and acclaim me—
Who knows? Perhaps posterity
Will not so much as name me."

A RECOLLECTION OF KRÄHWINKEL'S DAYS OF TERROR.

By us, the Mayor and Senate framed,
The following mandate is proclaimed,
In love paternal to all classes
Who represent the civic masses:

"'Tis mostly foreigners, we own,
By whom rebellion's seed is sown;
Such sinners seldom, praised be God,
Are children of our German sod.

"And atheists also share the crime;
He who denies his Lord, in time
A faithless renegade will prove him
To those on earth who rank above him.

"Obey your rulers: this be ever
The Jew's, the Christian's first endeavour,
And Christians, Jews, shall, every one,
Shut up their shops at set of sun.

"Should three of you together meet,
Disperse at once; and in the street
Let none of you be seen at night,
Abroad on foot, without a light.

"Straight to the guildhall of the town
Repair and lay your weapons down;
And subject to the same condition
Is every sort of ammunition.

"Whoever in a public spot
Attempts to argue shall be shot;
To reason by gesticulation
Will bring the self-same castigation.

"Your mayor ye must trust in blindly;
He guards the town and watches kindly,
With anxious care, o'er old and young.
Your business is to hold your tongue."

THE AUDIENCE.

(AN OLD FABLE.)

"I DROWN not children in the Nile
As Pharaoh used to do.
I am not Herod, who, of old,
The little children slew.

"On children, like the Lord, I'll look
In love, and not in scorn.
The little ones shall come to me,
And the big ones Swabian born."

Thus spake the King, and the Chamberlain
Went forth with hurrying feet,
And returned with the great big Swabian child,
Who made a reverence meet.

"You are from Swabia?" quoth the King;
"Well, well, 'tis no disgrace."
"Correctly guessed! I'm Swabian born;
You've named my native place."

"And from the seven Swabians wise
Do you reckon your descent?"
"I had not all the seven for sires;
With one I was content."

The King went on, "Are the dumplings good
In Swabian homes this year?"
"I judge them to be most excellent,
From what I taste and hear."

"And are your men still giants all?"
The King inquired. "Of late
They've run to fat instead of height;
Not one is truly great."

"Have Menzel's ears been often boxed
Since his notorious drubbing?"
"No, I rather fancy that in the past
He had sufficient snubbing."

"You're not so dull as you appear,
My friend—which would be tragic."
"Ah, that is because I was changed at birth,
By the cunning kobolds' magic."

"The Swabians used to love their land:
Of their home no race was fonder;
Say, what has caused you thus to leave
Your native haunts, and wander?"

"Sire, turnips and sauer-kraut, alas!
Are the only dishes made there.
Had my mother cooked me meat as well,
I should certainly have stayed there."

"Now, ask a favour," said the King.
The Swabian knelt and cried,
"Oh, give us our precious freedom back,
Which has been so long denied!

"For man is free; he was never born
A slave by Nature's plan.
O sire, restore to the German folk
The common rights of man!"

The King was moved; it was a scene
Too touching to forget.
The Swabian on his coat-sleeve wiped
His eyes with tear-drops wet.

Said the King at length, "'Tis a lovely dream!
Farewell; may time instruct you;
As at present you seem to walk in your sleep,
Two gendarmes will conduct you:

"By gendarmes stout, to the boundary line
You will forthwith be conveyed.
Farewell, I hear the beat of drums;
I'm due at the parade."

And so the touching audience came
To an equally touching end.
But to children the King has, ever since,
Been rather less of a friend.

KOBES I.

AT the time when passions were running high,
In eighteen forty-eight,
The German parliament was convened
At Frankfort for debate.

And the woman clad in white appeared
In the Senate House; 'tis said
When this ghost, whom they call the housekeeper, walks,
Disaster looms ahead.

In the Senate House she's always seen—
'Tis asserted as a fact—
When the honest Germans meditate
Some stupendously foolish act.

I saw her myself about that time
In the darkened hours of slumber;
She walked through the empty rooms, where, heaped,
Lies the mediæval lumber.

She held a lamp; in her bloodless hands
Was clasped a bunch of keys;
She opened the cupboards against the walls,
And the spacious chests with ease.

There lies the kaiser-insignia,
  There lies the seal of gold,
The apple of empire—the sceptre, the crown,
  And the rest of the whimsies old.

There lies the purple faded trash,
  The vestments worn by kings,
The wardrobe of the German realm,
  The rusted, mouldy things.

The housekeeper sadly shook her head
  When her eyes on the rubbish fell,
And suddenly cried in a tone of disgust,
  "What a horribly loathsome smell!

"It's reeking of mice! How rotten and foul
  Is the trumpery stuff; the ermine,
And all the pretentious, tawdry rags
  Are crawling with noisome vermin.

"From the look of the coronation robe
  And its fur, I almost fear
That the Senate House cats have made a point
  Of having their kittens here.

"God pity the luckless king to be!
  No hope of cleansing these!
This robe will keep him, his whole life long,
  Supplied with a plague of fleas.

"And when kaisers itch, as every one knows,
The people must scratch; to many,
O Germans! I fear these royal fleas
Will cost a pretty penny.

"But why have the king and the fleas at all?
This robe, see, through and through,
Is rotten and rusty and old; new times
Demand a costume new.

"The German bard at Kyffhaüser said
To Barbarossa truly,
'I find we need no kaiser at all,
When I weigh the matter duly.'

"But if nothing will please you short of a king:
If you're set on a monarchy hoary:
Dear Germans, be warned, and avoid the snare
Of genius and wit and glory.

"Away with the man of patrician birth!
A plebeian be sure you elect,
And see that he's also the dullest of sheep;
The fox and the lion reject.

"Choose stupid Kobes who lives in Cologne,
Elect him at once, I beseech you.
His stupidity almost to genius amounts;
He never will overreach you.

"As Æsop has shown in his fables wise,
The safest of kings are the Logs.
They're better than Storks with their pointed bills;
They never eat up the frogs.

"No Holofernes, no hero harsh
Will your Kobes be; you will find
That no cruel antique heart is his,
But a latter-day one, and a kind.

"Low huckstering pride despised this heart,
And, insulted, he fell on the breast
Of the Helots of work, and became the flower
Of labour's sons oppressed.

"The association of journeymen once
Chose Kobes to represent them;
He shared their last crust, and was volubly praised:
Indeed, seemed quite to content them.

"They vaunted the fact that he had not received
A university training:
His books from his inner consciousness wrote,
Idle scholarship thus disdaining;

"That the whole of his bottomless ignorance
He had won by his own endeavour;
That no foreign culture or learning vain
Had made him falsely clever.

"From abstract philosophy's influence dire
His mind, his thought was free.
'Our Kobes,' they say, 'has remained himself;
A character quite is he!'

"A stereotyped, unchanging tear
Shines always in his eyes;
And a heavy thick-lipped dulness, too,
On his utterance always lies.

"He prates and whines, and whines and prates,
Each word long-eared and crass,
An unhappy woman, who heard him talk,
Gave birth, they say, to an ass.

"With the knitting of stockings and writing of books
He beguiles his hours of leisure,
'Tis said that the stockings he knits, indeed,
Are lauded beyond all measure.

"Apollo and the Muses nine,
When he knits with praises cheer him;
If a goose-quill, however, they see in his hand,
They tremble at once, and fear him.

"This knitting recalls the good old days
Of the Funken, those heroes trusty
Who stood at their posts and knitted the while—
Their steel was never rusty!

"When Kobes is king, he is sure to revive
Those Funken brave, and reward
Their valour by calling them round his throne
As imperial bodyguard.

"And then, at the head of the glorious band,
How eager he'll be to advance
On Alsace and Lorraine and on Burgundy, too,
To win them again from France.

"But, friends, never fear, he will tarry at home,
Detained by a peaceful mission.
He must finish Cologne's cathedral first,
A great and worthy ambition.

"But at last, when the minster is built complete,
The anger of Kobes will mount,
And forth he will hurry, his sword in his hand,
To call the French to account.

"Alsace and Lorraine he will win again,
Purloined from the Fatherland;
On Burgundy, too, will, a victor, march,
When the minster's finished as planned.

"If a kaiser, O Germans! ye really want:
If ye cling to the notion you've nursed,
Elect the carnival king of Cologne,
And call him Kobes I.

"The mummers and fools of the carnival club
With their fools' caps ringing and mocking
Will be suitable ministers ready-made,
Their escutcheon a knitted stocking.

"And Drickes quaint will be Chancellor styled—
Count Drickes of Drickes Hall—
While Marizzebill, as the Mistress of State,
The Kaiser will drub and maul.

"His good and his holy town of Cologne
The King for his home will choose;
An illumination will testify, bright,
To the burgesses' joy at the news.

"The bells, the iron dogs of the air,
Will bark in jubilant riot,
And the Holy Three Kings of the morning land
Will wake from their slumber quiet.

"And forth they will step with a clatter of bones;
They will merrily dance and spring.
Hallelujahs loud I can hear them shout,
And the Kyrie Eleison sing."

The spirit that walks in white spake thus,
And stopped with a peal of laughter;
How horribly weird through the empty halls
The echoes sounded after.

EFFECTIVE MEANS.

ENTHUSIASM, hardihood,
You have them—good!
But ardour cannot take the place
Of circumspection's soberer grace.

The foe, I know it, does not fight
For justice, light.
But he has guns (what's almost sounder),
And cannons, many a hundred-pounder.

Stand with your weapons, calm and steady,
Gun cocked and ready;
Aim well, when thinned the foeman's ranks,
Your hearts may also thunder thanks.

AFFRONTENBURG.

I SEE the ancient castle still—
  The turret, and the battled wall,
The stupid folk about the place;
  Though years have fled, I see it all.

I still can see the weather-cock
  That on the roof went clanking round,
And drew from each a timid glance
  Before he dared to make a sound.

None spoke till he had first inquired
In what direction blew the wind,
In case old growling Boreas rude
Might buffet him with breath unkind.

The wise ones simply held their peace,
For in that castle, well they knew,
There was an echo which gave back,
With venomed malice, false for true.

A marble fountain, sphinx-adorned,
Down, midway, in the garden stood.
'Twas always dry, though many a tear
Had fallen by its sealëd flood.

Accursëd garden! Every spot
Some memory of woe has kept.
At every turn my heart was torn,
And everywhere mine eyes have wept.

In truth there grew no single tree
Beneath whose boughs had not been flung
Some insult or abusive speech,
By voice refined, or vulgar tongue.

The toad that listened in the grass
Informed the rat, who, word for word,
Confided to her aunt the snake
The tale the toad had overheard.

The snake rehearsed it to the frog,
And so at once the gossip spread,
And all the filthy fry enjoyed
The insults heaped upon my head.

The garden's roses blossomed fair,
And sweetly lured with odorous breath,
But, victims of some poison strange,
Before their time they drooped to death.

The nightingale, the noble bird,
Who sang the roses in their bloom,
Has perished since, and I believe
The self-same poison wrought her doom.

Accursëd garden! Yes, a curse,
An evil spell upon it lay,
And often with a ghostly fear
I shuddered in the light of day.

I seemed to see a spectre green
That grinned and mocked me, and I heard
A horrid sound of sighs and groans
From out the yew copse, weirdly stirred.

Down at the garden's further end
A terrace high was built, and, under,
When tides were full, upon the rocks
The North Sea billows broke in thunder.

There, gazing o'er the waters wide,
I dreamed mad dreams of wild unrest,
A fury like the Ocean's own
Was foaming, seething in my breast:

A foaming, seething, surging rage,
Vain as the billows', shattered wan
Against the hard and ruthless cliff,
However proudly they came on.

The passing ships I envied sore:
They sailed away to happier lands;
While to that castle I was bound,
A prisoner in accursëd bands.

TO EDWARD G.

WITH titles, honours, posts you have been piled,
A coat of arms and helmet plumed you claim;
Perhaps you're even "Excellency" styled,
To me you're a poor fellow all the same.

The noble nature does not move me much,
Which you so aptly found that you possessed,
Although its diamond lustre may be such
As Philistines display upon their breast.

My God! Beneath your uniform, I know,
For all its gold lace, hidden from our seeing,
There is a naked man oppressed with woe;
A sighing thing—a miserable being.

In no way different from the rest of us,
Your body must have nourishment or die;
So spare me, I beseech you, all this fuss
About enthusiasms grand and high!

WARNING.

WOUND not with voice unkind and cold
The youth who, needy and forlorn,
Turns in his want to thee for aid;
Perhaps he is divinely born.

A second meeting may disclose
The aureole around his head;
Before his grave, condemning eye,
Thine own would then be turned in dread.

DUELS.

ONE day two oxen in a yard
Were bickering and wrangling hard.
Their blood was boiling, and one brute
Lost, in the heat of the dispute,

His self-control and, wrath-inflamed,
An ass his adversary named;
Which is an insult to an ox,
So both John Bulls began to box.

At the self-same time in the self-same place
Two asses were in the self-same case.
It was a fierce and a furious spar,
And one of the long-ears went so far
As to give a wild Hee-ha! and roar,
That the other was only an ox, no more.
Now, of course you're aware, though it seems
rather crass,
If you call him an ox, you insult an ass.
So a duel arose from the donkey's dispute,
And they pummelled each other, head and foot.

And the moral? I think that cases occur
When a duel declined would leave a slur;
If any one calls him a foolish youth,
A student must fight to disprove the truth.

OVERHEARD.

"Oh, what did you pay for the Christian tall,
The husband of your daughter?
Say, wily Jekef, what did he cost?
Some damage time had wrought her.

"You paid sixty thousand marks, perhaps?
Or seventy thousand were fitter:
Yes, a likelier price for Christian flesh;
Your daughter's tongue was bitter.

"I'm a sad Schlemihl! They got from me
Just rather more than double;
And all that I had for my precious gold
Was wretched trash, and trouble."

Like Nathan the Wise, with a knowing smile,
Sly Jekef answers shrewdly,
"You give too much and too quickly, friend;
You raise the prices crudely.

"You only think of your business affairs,
Of railways, but more widely
I range in thought while, hatching schemes,
I wander about idly.

"We rate the Christians absurdly high;
Their value has much diminished.
I believe we'll be able to get a Pope
For a hundred marks ere we've finished.

"For my second daughter dear, just now
A bridegroom I have *in petto*,
He's a senator, standing six foot high,
Without kith or kin in the Ghetto.

"Forty thousand marks at the current rate
He'll cost me: I speak quite truly;
Half down, and the rest with interest fair,
To be paid by instalments duly.

"My son, in spite of his poor round back,
Will be burgomaster, I vow, yet.
I'll achieve my aim; the filthy scum
To my seed, I swear, shall bow yet.

"The famous swindler, my brother-in-law,
Assured me yesterday gravely,
That a Talleyrand had been lost in me:
'Twas a *rôle* I had acted bravely."

I heard these words! they reached my ear
From two that passed me, talking;
I heard them on the Jungfernstieg
One day, in Hamburg walking.

SIMPLICISSIMUS I.

Ill fortune disagrees with some,
Some cannot stand good fortune's savour.
The hate of men will ruin one,
Another's spoilt by women's favour.

When first we met you were unversed
In good society's airs and graces,
And bare was your plebeian hand
Which now a doe-skin glove encases.

Your coat had counted many springs:
So many that 'twas green and glistened;
The arms too short, the skirt too long—
Of a water-wagtail reminiscent.

Your neckcloth as a serviette,
Had with mamma before done duty.
Your head less proudly turned in that,
Than in this broidered, satin beauty.

And plain and honest were your boots,
As if Hans Sachs had been the shaper;
With German train-oil they were smeared—
No French, preposterous, varnished caper.

No eyeglass from your neck hung down,
No smell of musk your garments haunted;
You had no wife, no golden chain;
No velvet waistcoat grand you flaunted.

You dressed in Swabia's style approved,
Whose newest mode's already hoary;
And yet, in spite of all, your life
Was in the heyday of its glory.

You still had hair upon your head,
And, underneath it, still there hovered
And soared great thoughts. Alas! to-day
Your skull's both empty and uncovered.

And vanished is the laurel crown
Which as a wig had come in pat now.
Who has been pulling out your hair?
You look just like a shaven cat now.

Gone are the golden ducats given
By the silk-mercer when you won
And wed his daughter. "Little silk,"
He sighs, "has German poetry spun."

Is that the strenuous man who seemed
So eager to devour the world—
Its dumplings, puddings, all—and kings
To Hades had so gladly hurled?

That, the knight errant who of old
Like Quixote, model of such heroes,
Wrote in true third-form, schoolboy style,
Defiance to existing Neros?

Is that the general who led
Our German freedom, greatly daring;
And proudly trotted in advance,
Emancipation's banner bearing?

His steed was white like all the steeds
The gods and heroes rode before him,
Who now are dust. What shouts acclaimed
This saviour of the land that bore him!

A knightly virtuoso, he:
A Liszt on horseback, playing merely;
Quack hero and somnambulist,
Tom-fool by Philistines loved dearly.

In riding-habit, too, had come
His long-nosed wife; they rode together.
Wild ecstasy was in her eye,
And in her hat a saucy feather.

They say 'twas she who vainly strove
To hearten up her spouse, when shattered
His tender nerves were by the shots
That on the battlefield were scattered.

"Come, do not play the timid hare,
Nor cowardly misgivings cherish;
There is a kaiser's crown at stake,
And we must either win or perish.

"Think of the Fatherland's distress,
And of the debts 'neath which you sorrow.
At Frankfort crowned, like other kings
You will with ease from Rothschild borrow.

"The ermine cloak will suit you well.
Already I can hear the cadence
Of welcoming shouts: in fancy see
The flowers strewn by white-robed maidens."

Vain words! Antipathies exist
By which the strongest spirits cowed are.
As Goethe loathed tobacco smoke,
Our hero hates the smell of powder.

Crack go the shots—the hero pales,
And stammers incoherent phrases;
He sees things yellow—to her nose
Her handkerchief his poor wife raises.

So runs the story—is it true?
Who knows? Temptations oft attack us
That find us frail. Why, from the field,
Fled even the great Horatius Flaccus.

Sad fate of all on earth that's fair!
Even as the boor, the best among us
Must pass; the poet turns a clod,
And mere waste-paper what he sung us.

TELEOLOGICAL.

(FRAGMENT.)

TWAIN the legs we have from God,
That we might not to the sod
Cleave inertly, but alive
Struggle on and always strive,
Were we meant to stand, not run,
Legs enow we had with one.

And our eyes are also twain,
That we might have vision plain.
For believing what we read
One had amply served our need.
God bestowed on us the two
That around us we might gaze,
And, with pleasure and amaze,
Earth and all its wonders view.
But in gaping down the street
Well our eyes we must employ,
Lest the people whom we meet
Should our tender corns annoy—
Corns before whose pangs we flinch
When our shoes are tight and pinch.

And two hands from God have we,
That our giving may be free;

Not that doubly we may store,
To our much still adding more,
Till our iron chests are full,
Though such hoarding is the rule—
(But the names of those who do it,
If we gave them we should rue it,
We would hang them with delight,
But they're men of mark and might:
Philanthropic, honest—some
Are our patrons, so we're dumb.
German oak was never gallows
To the man whom money hallows).

As for nose, we have but one;
There is not a mother's son
In his glass could manage more,
Or the wine would trickle o'er.

Mouth we've one, because the double
Would have brought us certain trouble.
Yes, we gossip, as it is,
Far too much, and speak amiss.
With two mouths provided—why,
Even more we'd eat and lie.
When our mouths are full of broth,
We are dumb, however loth.
But with two mouths—naught to tether—
We would eat and lie together.

With two ears we are provided
By the Lord; a most decided
Aid to symmetry and grace;
Not so long as is the case,
For some reason, with those others:
With our honest, hoary brothers.
We have two that in the cadence
Of Mozart and Gluck and Haydn's
Masterpieces we may revel.
Were it all the colic-dreary,
Hemorrhoidal music weary
Of the mighty Meyerbeer,
One were plenty, and to spare.

Teutelinda, blonde of head,
Heard me out, and then she said:
"Ah, I know 'tis not for us
To demand why thus and thus
God has acted; criticise
Shall the clay the potter wise?
Yet to ask we're tempted strongly,
When we think things ordered wrongly.
Friend, I've listened to each word,
And with interest have heard
Why to man the Maker wise
Gave two arms, legs, ears, and eyes,
While one nose and mouth alone
'Twas ordained that he should own;
But the reason now explain. . . ."

* * *

PÆAN.

(FRAGMENT.)

FROM your brow remove the laurel,
  Where the leaves too long have hung;
With my words, Beer, do not quarrel,
  Hear the stammerings of my tongue.

Yes, I stammer every time
I address the man sublime,
Whose high genius reaches levels
In which every listener revels,
And whose fame's a master-work—
No mere casual, happy quirk
Of good fortune, which may come
In their sleep unsought, to some—
To such slovens in their art
As Rossini or Mozart.

No, our master dear may vaunt it—
'Tis a fact, and he may flaunt it—
He created all the fame
That attaches to his name.
By his strength of will 'twas wrought:
By his knowledge and his thought,
By political intriguing,
Calculations long, fatiguing.—

And his monarch, his protector
Made him general director
Of our music; and, in fine,
Gave him power . . .
Over what I hereby humbly claim as mine.

IT IS USUALLY DONE.

> "The pancakes which I have hitherto given for three silver groschen, I will give in future for two. It is usually done."

As if cast in bronze, in memory stays
An advertisement which, in bygone days,
On a news-sheet happened to catch my eyes
In Prussia's capital, learned and wise.

Berlin in Prussia! Town I love!
Your fame will blossom eternal and prove
Forever fresh, like your lindens green—
Are the winds that torment them still as keen?
And what of the Zoo? Is a beast still there
Who sits by his wife with golden hair,
And drinks pale ale as he did of old,
Where morals are good, and cups are cold?

Berlin in Prussia, what are you doing?
What idler to-day is your laughter wooing?
Your Nante had not yet appeared in my time,
And the only wits you considered prime

Were Herr Wisotzki; a humour pleasant
Had the Crown Prince, too, your King at present.
But now his jocular tastes are dead,
And he wears his crown with a drooping head.
For this monarch I've rather a weakness—he's shown
Some qualities curiously like my own:
He is lofty of soul, his talent is great,
And I'm sure I could never have ruled a state;
And music he loathes with all his heart,
That noble and ear-splitting, monstrous art.
For this reason, no other, he fosters with care
The music-destroyer, Meyerbeer.
It is not true that the king he paid,
As a wicked world has falsely said.
One hears such lies, and repeats so many!
The king has received not a single penny;
Nor has Meyerbeer either, for though he directs
The Opera House, that fact affects
His purse not at all; the whole that he gains
Is an empty title or two for his pains.
I tell you a true and authentic thing—
He works for nothing for Prussia's king.

When I think of Berlin, I always see
The University fronting me.
The red Hussars ride past it, proud,
With music and drum and fanfare loud.

The martial notes, with their gallant swing,
In the students' quadrangle echo and ring.
And how are the Herr Professors all,
With their asses' ears both large and small?
Say, how is Savigny, the troubadour sweet
Of the Pandects—elegant, dainty, and neat?
That charming person, for all I know,
May be dead and forgotten long ago.
If this be the case, do not fear to declare it;
My fortitude's such that I think I could bear it.
And Lotte is gone! Ah, for all alike—
For men and for dogs—the hour must strike,
And most surely for dogs who, in ignorance dark,
At wisdom and reason yelp and bark,
And fain would transform us Germans free
Into Roman slaves of base degree.
And flat-nosed Massmann, he, I trust,
Is not yet forgotten and laid in the dust.
I will not believe that his race is run.
If that were the case I should weep for woe!
Oh, long may he flourish beneath the sun,
And trip with his short legs to and fro:
With his down-drooping paunch like a mandrake go!
I really dote on that figure queer:
I have loved it fondly for many a year.
I can conjure it up whenever I wish—
So tiny he was, and he drank like a fish

With his pupils, who crowned their feats gymnastic
By giving their master a drubbing drastic.
And what blows they were! The youths with a will
Set out to show that vigour crude
And boorish barbarity flourished rude
In the sons of Hermann and Thusneld still!
With their unwashed German hands he was beat,
He was pummelled and kicked with fists and feet;
They seemed unable to pound him enough,
And the poor wretch took their treatment rough!
I remember I cried, "My admiration,
You have won by your patience 'neath castigation.
You have borne yourself as a Brutus true."
But Massmann made answer, "Most people do."

And *à propos* of our Massmann, pray,
Have the Teltower turnips done well this year,
And the gherkins sour, in my Berlin dear?
And the men of letters, how are they?
Are they still quite pleased with things, although
They haven't a genius among them to show?
But what do they want with genius? Humble
And modest gifts are less apt to stumble.
And decent men have their uses too—
Twelve make a dozen—'tis all many do.

The lieutenants, say, of the guard, in Berlin—
Are their waists still ungirt; still as far from thin?
Are they always as arrogant?—Jeering as coolly
At townsmen as dogs, do they swagger and bully?
I warn you, your doom may soon be spoken.
Our patience is cracking, though still unbroken;
You may find in the end, if it's tried too sore,
That the Brandenburg gate is as wide as of yore,
And that all of a sudden we'll throw you out,
And send your prince to the right-about—
It's usually done.

AN ANSWER.

(FRAGMENT.)

In the right path undoubtedly your feet were,
Though, as to time, you may have been all wrong.
Those were not musk and myrrh, those odours strong
That came from Germany, and far from sweet were.

Let trumpetings of victory be mute
So long as our oppressors carry sabres.
Serpents that hiss of love, I fear as neighbours,
And wolves and asses that of freedom flute—

. . . . . .

1649–1793—???

THE British were, as regicides,
Too rude to serve as helpful guides.
King Charles, doomed next day to die,
At Whitehall sleepless had to lie,
While all night long the people clamoured,
And on his scaffold workmen hammered.

The French were hardly more polite.
By all the rules of etiquette
Poor Louis had a perfect right
To use a carriage; we regret
That in a cab, devoid of state,
He was conducted to his fate.

As for his queen, worse fell upon her;
A common cart was all she got.
For chamberlain and maid of honour
Sat by her side a sans-culotte.
Her Hapsburg under-lip stuck out,
How widow Capet scorned the rout!

Both French and British in such dealings
Are lacking in the finer feelings.
Only the German kind remains
When bloody terrorism reigns.

Yes, majesty he'll always treat
With pious awe and honour meet.
He'll see that the coach and six is draped
With black, the horses plumed and craped:
That high on the box the driver's weeping
With his mourning whip; and thus, in keeping
With his royal birth, our king shall ride
To the guillotine with pomp and pride.

CITRONIA.

'Twas in the days of long ago,
While still in frocks I used to go,
And in a dame-school, knowledge winning,
My A B C was just beginning—
I was the only boy who pined
In that bird-cage narrow and confined.
A dozen charming little maidens
Piped joyously in merry cadence;
Most sweetly they would trill and chatter—
Their spelling was another matter.
In spectacled and arm-chair state
Frau Hindermans dispensed our fate,
(Her nose an owl's beak, you'd have said)
As to and fro she wagged her head,
The ominous birch-rod in her hand
With which she beat her little band,

When the poor weeping things would make
Some harmless, innocent mistake.
By that old woman not a few
Were beaten black and beaten blue.
Scorn and ill-treatment are the share
Of all on earth that is most fair.

Citronia I called the land,
Evoked as by a magic wand;
Once at Frau Hindermans', while dreaming,
In sudden light I saw it gleaming.
'Twas an ideal sweet and tender,
Oval, of lemon-golden splendour,
Of friendly and alluring grace,
But proud withal—Ah, lovely face,
First blossom of my love, thy bloom
For me no blighting years could doom!
The child became a youth, a man,
The golden dream the child began—
Oh, wondrous strange that it should wend
To sweet fulfilment in the end!—
That what I sought for far and wide
Now wanders, living, by my side:
That, in her presence warm, I feel
Her fragrant breath upon me steal!—
But ah! a curtain black as night
Still robs mine eyes of their delight!

Some flimsy shreds, as slight and thin
As the frail web that spiders spin,
Betwixt me and the glory stand
Of my Citronia—magic land!

Like Tantalus, I must endure
Vain joys that mock while they allure;
The draught that draws my thirsty lips,
From me, as from that monarch, slips.
Alas! so near and yet so far
The fruits that I would taste of are!
Accursëd be the worm that span
The silk, accursëd be the man
Who wove the hateful fabric dim
Whereof that curtain dark and grim,
And infamously vile was made!
My sunshine turning into shade,
It holds me evermore asunder
From my Citronia, land of wonder!

Often I've felt within me burning
A frantic and a fevered yearning.
Oh, the accursëd barrier! Oft
An impious hand I've raised aloft
To tear the silken shroud, and find
The bliss that lurks concealed behind.
But 'twas, for many reasons, plain
From such a deed I must refrain.

Besides, such hardihood and passion
Are now-a-days no more the fashion!

EPILOGUE.

Plainly, without figures garnished,
I shall tell you, quite unvarnished,
What Citronia was. But, now,
Time and place will not allow.
(And of those who guess, or know it,
None will e'er betray the poet.)
Meanwhile trust me, for 'tis true:
Art is only vapour blue.
What that blossom was which flowered,
Blue of chalice, and embowered
In great Ofterdinger's lay,
Sweet, romantic, who shall say?
The blue nose, for aught we know,
Of some cousin dying slow,
In a nunnery of consumption;
Or, as likely a presumption,
Just a garter dropped by chance
By some lady in a dance;
Though from such a thought one shrinks—
Shame to him who evil thinks!

COLD HEARTS.

WHEN I saw you first performing
In the pasteboard world of art,
Dressed in gold and silken raiment,
Shylock's daughter was your part.

Cold and shining was your forehead,
And your voice was cold and clear,
And you seemed, O Donna Clara,
Like a glacier, fair, austere.

And for wife the Christian won you,
And the Jew his daughter lost—
For Lorenzo worse than Shylock!
And my heart was chilled with frost.

When the second time I saw you
We were near enough to woo;
I was cast to play Lorenzo,
And my Jessica were you.

And you seemed with love delirious;
I, alas! was drunk with wine:
Pressed your eyes with drunken kisses,
Eyes like jewels, cold and fine.

Was I mad when I determined
To be wed at any price?
Was my reason only frozen
By its nearness to your ice?

On our honeymoon we started:
To Siberia took the way;
Like a steppe the bridal couch was—
Cold and rigid, bleak and grey.

With my limbs benumbed and stiffened,
On the steppe I lay alone,
While my amorous ditties, freezing,
Made a soft, complaining moan.

For my Jessica ignored me;
Amor's teeth betrayed the cold.
I was fain a snowy pillow
To my burning heart to hold.

* * *

Now, alas! my songs and sallies,
Children luckless and forlorn,
One and all into this world
Are with frozen noses born.

For my muse has influenza—
  Muses feel and muses sneeze—
And she says to me, "Dear Henry,
  Let me go before I freeze."

O Love's temples, faintly heated
  But with farthing dips in parts,
Wherefore points my passion's compass
  To the North Pole of such hearts?

IN THE MORNING EARLY.

Lo! my wife so dear and kind,
Wife most lovely and belovëd,
Has my breakfast ready waiting;
White the cream, the coffee brown.

And she pours it out herself,
Joking, smiling, and caressing,
In all Christendom so sweetly
Not another mouth can smile.

And a voice so flute-like only
Can be heard among the angels,
Or, on earth, if there's another,
'Mongst the sweetest nightingales.

BIMINI.

PROLOGUE.

FAITH in miracles!—Blue flower
That has vanished now, how radiant
In the hearts of men it blossomed
In the days of which we sing!

Ah, that time of faith in wonders!
'Twas a wonder in itself;
And the marvels were so many
That at last one ceased to marvel.

In the common light of custom
Cold and workaday, familiar,
Men beheld things strange, prodigious,
Which for wildness far transcended

In their flight the wildest, maddest
Of the fables in the legends
Told by credulous and pious
Monks and chivalric romancists.

Came a morn of bridal beauty
When there rose a sea-born marvel,
An undreamed-of, a new world
From the billows blue of ocean.

New the world and new the men there,
New the beasts and new the flowers,
New the trees and birds, and also
New and many the diseases.

And our own, our old world, meanwhile,
Was completely metamorphosed,
Was transformed beyond all knowing,
And miraculously changed.

By inventions and discoveries
Of the mind, the new magician,
By our Berthold Schwarz's black art,
And the black art still more subtle

Of the exorcist of Mainz;
By the power and the magic
Of the books that, from Byzantium
And from Egypt, bearded wizards

Wending westward brought amongst us,
And with learned skill translated—
One was called the Book of Beauty,
And the Book of Truth the other.

Both by God Himself were written,
In two different heavenly tongues;
We believe, too, that He wrote them
With His own eternal hand.

By the little trembling needle,
The divining-rod of sailors,
Men, exploring on the waters,
Found at last the way to India,

To the home they long had sought for
Of sweet aromatic spices,
Where they grow in careless plenty,
And where, creeping on the ground,

Twist and riot growths fantastic,
Herbs and flowers, trees and bushes,
In the vegetable kingdom
Nobles, jewels of the crown:

Those most rare and subtle spices,
With their strange, mysterious powers,
Which may cure man of diseases,
Or more aggravate his sickness—

It depends entirely whether
Some apothecary learned
Has compounded them, or only
An illiterate Hungarian.

When the garden-gate of India
Was thrown wide, into the heart
Of the ancient world an ocean
Poured its aromatic billows:

A lascivious and monstrous
Flood of strange, balsamic odours,
Softly deadening the senses,
Or intoxicating wildly.

And the blood of men danced madly,
As if scourged by fiery brands,
Or by rods of flame, so eager
Was the love of gold and pleasure.

But 'twas gold that was the watchword,
For by gold, the yellow pander,
Every sort of earthly pleasure
Can be easily obtained.

Hence was gold the first word uttered
By the Spaniard when he entered
Hut or tent among the Indians;
Even water was but second.

Yes, the Mexicans, Peruvians
Saw the orgy of this gold-thirst,
Saw Pizarro, Cortes, wallowing,
Weltering, drunk with gold, in gold.

When the temple fell at Quito,
Lopez Bacca stole the sun—
Full twelve hundredweight 'twas heavy—
Yet the self-same night he lost it;

Playing dice he staked and lost it.
Still the people have a proverb:
"That is Lopez; he who, gambling,
Lost a sun before the dawn."

Ha! Those men were mighty players,
Mighty thieves and great assassins,
(None, of course, is wholly perfect)
But miraculous their deeds were,

In their prowess far transcending
Those of even the dreadest warriors,
From great Holofernes downward
To our Haynau and Radetzki.

For, when men believed in wonders,
Wonders also they accomplished;
The impossible, believed in,
The impossible performs.

Only foolish people doubted;
All the wise were firm believers;
Yes, before the daily marvels
Wise men bowed their heads devoutly.

From that time of faith and wonder;
Strange that thus there should keep ringing
In my head to-day the story
Of Don Juan Ponce de Leon,

Who was Florida's discoverer,
And who many years sought vainly
For the island of his yearning,
For the magic Bimini.

Bimini! Thy name so sweet is
That the sound within my bosom
Stirs my heart, and reawakens
Dreams of youth, with youth that perished.

On their heads the crowns are withered,
And they gaze upon me sadly;
Long-dead nightingales are fluting,
Sobbing tenderly to death.

From my couch I rear up startled,
And my poor sick limbs are shaking
With such violence that stitches
Crack and burst in my strait waistcoat.

But I needs must end by laughing,
For I hear the parrot-voices,
Seem to hear them shrilling sadly,
Drolly shrilling, Bimini.

Aid me, Muse, wise mountain-fairy
Of Parnassus, God-descended!
Help me now, and prove the magic
Of the noble art poetic—

Show the power of thy witchcraft;
Change my song into a vessel—
Magic vessel that shall bear me
To the Isle of Bimini!

And the words are scarcely uttered,
When, behold! my wish is granted;
From the airy stocks of fancy,
See! the magic ship is launched.

Who for Bimini will sail now?
Sirs and ladies, step on board.
Wind and weather in our favour,
You'll be borne to Bimini.

Honoured sirs, is gout your trouble,
Or have lovely ladies, prying,
On your snowy brow already
Wrinkles premature discovered?

Ship for Bimini; and yonder,
For the shamefullest diseases
You will find a swift assuagement;
Hydropathic is the treatment!

Fear not, gallants; ladies, fear not;
Stout and steady is my vessel,
For the keel and planks are fashioned
Out of trochees strong as oak.

At the helm sits Fancy, steering,
And Good-humour fills the sails.
Wit's the cabin-boy. If Wisdom
Is on board, too?—That I know not.

Of apt metaphors the yards are,
An hyperbole my sail is;
Black-red-golden is my ensign—
Fable-colours of romance,

Barbarossa's tricolor,
As in days of old I saw it
In Kyffhäuser, and at Frankfort,
In St. Paul's Cathedral hanging.—

On through Fairyland's bright ocean,
Through the blue, the fairy sea,
Sails my ship, my magic vessel:
Whitely ploughs its dreamy furrows.

In the swelling, billowy azure,
Strewn with sparks of fire, before me
Rippling, splashing, sails an army—
Tumbling dolphins giant-headed.

On their backs my sea-postillions,
Little loves with chubby faces,
Gaily ride, and through the curious
Horns of shell, as through a trumpet,

Blow resounding, lusty fanfares.
And—oh hearken!—from the ocean
Underneath, arose a sudden
Sound of twittering and laughter.

Ah, I know those little people,
Know those sweetly mocking voices,
Know those doubting, scoffing witches,
Those Undines, pertly laughing

At my passengers and vessel,
And at me—at fools and folly—
At the madness of my voyage
To the Isle of Bimini.

I.

On the shore of Cuba, lonely
By the mirror of calm water,
Stands a man who gazes silent
On his image in the flood.

He is old, but stands unstooping,
With the Spaniard's bold uprightness;
Half a sailor, half a soldier,
He would seem from his apparel.

Roomy fishing-boots are bagging
'Neath a coat of tawny elk-skin,
While his bandolier is fashioned
Of embroidered cloth of gold.

And, of course, from this suspended,
Hangs the long sword of Toledo;
From his grey felt hat cock-feathers,
Jaunty, red as blood, are waving.

But these throw a gloomy shadow
On the tanned old face beneath them—
Face that time has treated roughly
And that men have marred as well;

For across the wrinkles, furrowed
By fatigue and age and toil,
Run the scars of badly mended
Deep and deadly sabre-wounds.

'Tis with little satisfaction
That the man intently gazes
At the sad and troubled image
In the water at his feet.

Now and then he thrusts his hands out,
As if warding off some evil,
And he shakes his head and, sighing
To himself, begins to mutter.

"Is this Juan Ponce de Leon,
He who bore the gorgeous train of
The Alcalde's lovely daughter
At the castle of Don Gomez?

"Light the youth was then, and slender;
Round a head that harboured only
Rosy thoughts and giddy fancies
Golden, shining tresses curled.

"Every lady in Seville
Knew his horse's tread and hurried,
Swift and eager, to the window
When he rode along the street.

"If the rider called his dogs in—
Clicked his tongue against his gums—
Through the hearts of lovely women,
Blushing women, pierced the music.

"Is that Juan Ponce de Leon,
He who, dreaded by the Moors,
Mowed the turbans down by hundreds,
Mowed them down like heads of thistles?

"On the plain before Granada,
In the presence of the army—
All the Christian army—knighthood
I received from Don Gonzalvo.

"And I spent that evening dancing
To the fiddles' merry cadence,
In the tent of the Infanta,
With the ladies of the court.

"But by me, that night, unheeded
Was the music of the fiddles:
Was the soft and tender wooing
Of the women, lovely women.

"Like a foal I stamped and pounded
On the floor of the pavilion,
Hearing nothing but the clanking
Of my golden spurs, my first ones.

"With the years came deeper earnest
And ambition; with Columbus
I adventured on his second
Wondrous, world-discovering voyage.

"My devotion was unswerving
To this Christopher, who also,
Like his namesake, bore the Gospel
To the heathen, through the water.

"Unforgettable the mildness
Of his eye. He suffered dumbly,
And by night he wailed his sorrows
To the stars and billows only.

"When the admiral, his mission
Well achieved, returned to Spain,
I took service with Ojeda,
And I shared in his adventures.

"And from tip to toe Ojeda
Was a gallant knight; no better
In the past was ever famous
At King Arthur's Table Round.

"Fighting, fighting, was the passion
Of his soul, and, smiling gaily,
He would fight the savage races
When by countless swarms surrounded.

"When a poisoned arrow struck him,
He himself would, with an iron
Red and glowing from the furnace,
Brand his wound, still gaily smiling.

"I remember once we waded
To the hips in deep morasses
From which no one knew the exit,
Without food and without water,

"And for thirty days already
Thus had floundered (of the hundred
Men and twenty who had started
More than eighty must have perished).

"And the bog grew ever deeper,
And, despairing, we lamented—
'Twas Ojeda cheered our spirits,
Still undaunted, smiling gaily.

"Later on, with Don Bilbao
I went fighting—as courageous
As Ojeda was this hero,
And more skilled as a tactician.

"All his thoughts were soaring eagles
That had made his head their eyrie.
Generosity illumined,
Like a sun, his heart with radiance.

"And he won a hundred kingdoms
For the Spanish crown, that greater
Were than Europe, and much richer
Than are Venice even, and Flanders.

"And the guerdon that they gave him
For those hundred kingdoms, larger
Far than Europe, and much richer
Even than Venice, or than Flanders,

"Was a simple hempen neckband:
Was a rope; they hanged Bilbao
Like a common malefactor
On the square at St. Sebastian.

"Though, as warrior, less knightly
And of spirit less heroic,
Yet was Don Fernando Cortez
As a leader unsurpassed.

"In the miniature armada
By which Mexico was conquered
I took service; full of hardship
Was that toilsome expedition.

"Gold I won there; gold in plenty,
And fell ill of yellow fever;
Of my health a goodly portion
I was forced to leave behind me.

"With the gold I was enabled
To equip some vessels; trusting
To my lucky star, discovered
Here at last the Isle of Cuba;

"Which I govern in the name of
Queen Joanna of Castile
And of Arragon's Fernando—
Greatly loved by both the monarchs.

"I have now attained the object,
Reached the goal, of man's ambition—
Titles, glory, princely favour
And the Calatrava Order.

"I am viceroy, and possessor
Of a hundred thousand pesos,
Golden ingots, precious jewels,
Many a sack of precious pearls.

"But I cannot see the pearls
Without thinking, sighing sadly,
'It were better to have guarded
Still the teeth I had when young.'

"Ah, the teeth of youth! Together
With the days of youth they vanished—
At the thought with futile anger
Now I gnash my rotten stumps.

"Ah, ye teeth of youth, together
With the days of youth! How gladly
All my bags of pearls I'd barter
For the power to buy you back:

"All my jewels, golden ingots,
And my hundred thousand pesos,
Yes, and, over and above that,
Even my Calatrava Order—

"Take my wealth, my fame and honours,
And, instead of Excellency
Call me dunce and clown and booby,
Good-for-nothing, ragged urchin!

"Blessed Virgin, hear and help me!
Oh, have pity on the fool
Who, ashamed, thus pines in secret,
And conceals his hopeless sorrow!

"Holy Virgin! to thee only
Can I show my heart, confessing
What I could not bear to utter
To a saint of my own sex.

"For those saints are men, as I am;
And Caracho! even in heaven
Never man shall smile in pity
Upon Juan Ponce de Leon.

"Though thy pure and spotless beauty
Is unchanging and eternal,
Thou, O Virgin, art a woman—
With the instinct of a woman

"Wilt divine the woe the wretched,
Frail and fleeting man must suffer,
When his noble strength and glory
Dies and withers to grotesqueness!

"Ah, the trees who all together
Are denuded of their foliage
By the self-same wind of autumn,
How much happier are they!

"All alike they stand in winter,
Sad and bare; no tender stripling,
Still in garlands green, to triumph
O'er his withered forest comrades.

"But we men have separate seasons,
And alone we wax and wane;
With the one 'tis cruel winter,
With the other blooming spring.

"And the old man feels his weakness
Doubly bitter when he gazes
Upon youth's superfluous vigour—
Blessed Virgin, hear in heaven!

"From my limbs shake off the languor
Of this wintry hoar old age,
Which my head with snow has covered,
And my blood has chilled and frozen.

"Bid the sun to pour his ardour
Once again into my veins;
Bid the spring to reawaken
In my heart her nightingales.

"To my cheeks restore their roses,
To my head its tresses golden;
Hear, O Virgin! hear and answer;
Give me back my vanished youth!"

When Don Juan Ponce de Leon
Thus a while had grieved and muttered,
In his hands his face he buried,
Hid his face in bitter sorrow;

And he wept and sobbed so wildly,
With such overpowering passion,
That, between his meagre fingers,
Flowed his tears in crystal torrents.

II.

To his ancient sailor habits
Still on land the knight is faithful,
For his bed he swings a hammock,
As of old upon his vessel.

And he misses, too, the motion
Of the billows that so often
Used to soothe, and bring him slumber;
So at night they rock the hammock.

And the duty falls to Kaka,
To an ancient Indian woman
Who repulses the mosquitoes
With a fan of peacock feathers.

While she rocks the airy cradle
With its poor grey-headed infant,
As a lullaby she murmurs,
Soft, a legend of her home.

Is the magic in the sing-song,
Or the woman's voice that croons it,
Fluting faintly, like the twitter
Of a siskin? And she sings:

"Little birdie, Kolibri,
Lead the way to Bimini;
Fly ahead and we will follow
In a pennoned, gay piragua.

"Little fish, my Bridídi,
Lead the way to Bimini;
Swim in front and we will follow,
Wreaths of flowers on our oars.

"On the Isle of Bimini
Blooms the bliss of May eternal,
Golden larks for ever warbling
In the blue their tirili.

"Slender flowers bloom and wanton
As if wild upon a prairie,
Sweet and passionate their odour,
And their hue voluptuous, burning.

"From the ground the mighty palm trees
Rear to heaven, with their fans
Cool and shadowy kisses wafting
To the flowers underneath them.

"In the Isle of Bimini
From a precious magic fountain,
From a well, on earth the fairest,
Flows the youth-bestowing water.

"If a flower wan and withered
Is but sprinkled with this water—
With some drops—anew it blossoms,
Flaunts again in bloom and beauty.

"If a twig, however faded,
Is but sprinkled with this water—
With some drops—with buds new-thronging
It will burgeon brave and greenly.

"If an old man drinks this water
He grows young again; his age
Casts completely, as a beetle
Casts his caterpillar skin.

"Many a greybeard, by the water
Made a stripling blonde and handsome,
Lacking courage for returning
To his home, a saucy youth—

"Many a mother who has swallowed
Of the spring, and youth recovered,
Lacking courage for returning
To her home a merry maiden—

"Tarry still, as maids and striplings,
In the Isle of Bimini,
Chained by spring and chained by pleasure
To the land of youth eternal.

"For the land of youth eternal,
For the island Bimini
I am yearning, I am longing;
Friends beloved, fare ye well.

"Dear old tabby, Mimili,
Dear old cock, my Kikriki,
Fare ye well, no more shall we
Home return from Bimini!"

So the woman sang. The warrior,
Slumber-drunken hears her singing;
Like a child he sighs, he stammers;
Dreaming, murmurs: "Bimini!"

III.

On the Isle of Cuba gaily
Shines the sun on gulf and shore;
In the sky above there's music,
All the blue is hung with fiddles.

Kissed by ardent spring to blushes,
In her green, her emerald corset,
Like a bride adorned and radiant,
Blooms and glows the lovely island.

Folk of every age and station,
Iridescent on the beach,
Move and swarm, but every bosom
With a common pulse is beating.

For a common thought consoling
Fills them all alike with bliss:
Thought whose rapture finds expression
In the quiet, trembling gladness

Of an old Beguin who, limping
On her slow and painful crutches,
Tells the beads upon her rosary,
Murmuring pious paternosters.

'Tis the self-same thought consoling
Gives the face of the signora,
On the gilded litter carried,
Such a look of smiling gladness,

As she prettily coquets,
Flower in mouth, with the hidalgo
Who, the tip of his moustachios
Curling gaily, walks beside her.

On the stiff and martial faces
Of the soldiers joy is shining,
And of those, to-day unwrinkled,
Of the clergy genial, merry.

The emaciated black-coat,
How he rubs his hands, delighted!
How the fat Franciscan friar
Strokes his double chin with glee!

Even the bishop whose expression
So morose is at the reading
Of the mass, because his breakfast
Is delayed a little meanwhile,

Smiles and smirks with satisfaction;
On his nose the red carbuncles
Sparkle brightly, and he waddles
In his feast-day robe, contented,

'Neath the canopy of purple,
With the choristers around him
Swinging censers of sweet incense,
And by priests resplendent followed—

Priests in gold brocade who carry
Gilded parasols above them,
And who look, for all the world,
Like colossal mushrooms walking.

To the high communion-table
They go winding, to the altar
Which, beneath the open heaven,
On the shore has been erected,

And adorned with blooming flowers,
Holy paintings, palms and ribbons,
Silver vessels, golden tinsel,
Waxen tapers glistening brightly.

For his Eminence the Bishop
Is about to hold a high-mass
On the beach: with praise and prayer,
To pronounce a solemn blessing

On the little fleet that's rocking
In the roadstead yonder, ready
To weigh anchor and set sail
For the Isle of Bimini.

Yes, the vessels riding yonder
Have by Juan Ponce de Leon
Been equipped and manned for sailing
To the isle of bliss and magic,

Where the fount of youth eternal
Sweetly bubbles; from the strand
Many hearts acclaim and bless him
As a saviour of mankind,

As a noble benefactor
Of the world; and all are hoping
To receive a flask of youth,
When the knight returns to Cuba.

And already in their fancy
Many drain the draught of healing
Shake with rapture like the vessels
Yonder anchored in the roadstead.

And the ships of the flotilla—
Five in number—are a carvel
Big and roomy, two feluccas
And a pair of brigantines.

And the carvel is the flagship,
And it flies a gallant ensign,
The escutcheons of Castile
And of Arragon and Leon.

Like a bower she is covered
And adorned with hawthorn blossom,
Garlands bright and flower-chaplets,
And with gay and fluttering pennons.

Dame Speranza they have called her,
And behind the vessel's poop
Stands an image of the lady,
Large as life and carved in oak.

And most excellently painted,
Too, in nicely varnished colours,
To defy both wind and weather;
'Tis indeed a stately figure.

Of a brick-red hue her face is,
And her neck and bosom also,
From a corset green emerging;
Green the garment, too, that clothes her.

Green her woven chaplet likewise,
While as black as pitch her hair is;
Pitchy black her eyes and eyebrows,
In her hand she holds an anchor.

And the strength of the flotilla
Is a hundred souls and eighty,
Roughly counted, of which only
Six are women and six, priests

Eighty men, one single lady
On the caravel are quartered,
Which by Juan Ponce de Leon
Is commanded; and the lady,

She is Kaka: yes, old Kaka
Has become a stately lady,
The Señora Juanita;
By the knight has been promoted,

Made Grand Mistress of the Fly-fan,
And Chief Rocker of the Hammock,
And dispenser of the water
Welling sweet at Bimini;

Holds, as symbol of her office,
In her hand a golden goblet,
Wears a tunic high-upgirdled,
Like a fair and youthful Hebe.

Fine and costly Brussels lace,
Dozens, too, of strings of pearls
Deck derisively the sallow
Withered charms of the Señora;

While her puffed and padded coiffure
Towers, cannibal-rococo—
Caribbean—Pompadour-ish,
Bright with countless little birds.

Birds no bigger than a beetle,
Just like flowers with their gorgeous
Wings and gay, enamelled colours,
Formed of sparkling precious jewels.

And this droll, fantastic head-dress
Made of birds was strangely suited
To the curious face of Kaka,
So exactly like a parrot's.

Very counterpart of Kaka
Was Don Juan Ponce de Leon,
Who, with confidence believing
That his youth would be restored,

Had attired himself already
In the dress of charming youth,
And adorned his person gaily,
Like a fashionable coxcomb:

Like a pert young jackanapes—
Pointed shoes with belts of silver;
Slashed his hose, the right leg coloured
Rosy red, the left a green one,

Striped and gaudy; satin doublet
Bravely puffed; a mantle hanging
Short and jaunty from his shoulder;
Cap with triple ostrich feather.

Thus equipped and blithely holding
In his hands a lute, the leader,
Hither, thither, lightly dancing,
To the crew his orders issues.

He commands them to weigh anchor
On the instant when the signals
Shall announce to them from shore
That the holy mass is ended.

He commands that, on departing,
All the cannons on the vessels,
Thrice a dozen salvos firing,
Shall salute the Isle of Cuba.

His commands he issues twirling
Like a top and pirouetting,
Blissful, drunken with the prospect
Of the dream-begotten draught.

And he twangs the plaintive lute-strings,
And they wail and whine and whimper,
And he quavers out the sing-song
With his voice so old and feeble:

"Little bird, my Kolibri,
Little fish, my Bridídi,
Fly and swim in front, and lead us
To the Isle of Bimini!"

IV.

Now this Juan Ponce de Leon
Was no fool and idle rover,
When he undertook the voyage
To the Isle of Bimini.

The existence of the island
Was a fact he never doubted,
For to him old Kaka's sing-song
Was a guarantee sufficient.

Prone the sailor more than others
To believe in signs and wonders,
For his eyes for ever look on
Heaven's great and flaming marvel,

While around him always murmurs
The mysterious flood of ocean,
From whose bosom rose aforetime
Donna Venus Aphrodite.

In my few remaining trochees
Ye shall hear related truly,
That the knight endured great hardship,
And sore labour and long travail.

Ah, instead of growing well
Of his former pain and sickness,
He was grievously afflicted
By a host of new diseases.

While in search of youth he voyaged
He grew older, older daily;
Lean and wasted, full of wrinkles,
To the land he came at last,

To the silent land, where, drearly,
Under cypresses of shadow,
Flows the stream whose darkling waters
None the less are strangely healing—

And the river's name is Lethe!
If thou drink thereof, thy sorrow
Is forgotten; yea, forgotten
All the woes that thou hast suffered.

Healing water! Happy land!
None who find it ever leave it,
For that country is the real,
Is the only Bimini.

APPENDIX TO "LAZARUS."

I.

HOLY parables discarding,
  Hypothetical and pious,
Our accursëd questions answer,
  And with truth direct supply us.

Tell us plainly why the good man
  'Neath a heavy cross should bleed,
While the wicked man rides proudly
  Like a conqueror on his steed.

Whose the fault? Is God in heaven
  Not almighty after all?
Is the wrong of His contriving?
  That were surely base and small.

So we ask and ask unceasing,
  Till a handful of cold clay
Stops our mouths and we are silenced.
  But is that an answer, pray?

2.

To her heart the black woman clasped my head,
But, ah! while thus it lay,
My hair, on which, weeping, her tears she shed
Grew bleached and thin and grey.

She kissed me sick and she kissed me lame,
She kissed me blind; alack!
She even sucked with her mouth of flame
The marrow from out my back.

My body is now a corpse; it keeps
My soul in a prisoning cage;
And my soul, gone crazy, often leaps
And foams with helpless rage.

Ah, fury vain! Not the frailest fly
Your bitterest curse can kill;
So whine and pray and meekly try
To bow to heaven's will.

3.

How slowly Time, the horrid snail,
Seems on his tardy way to crawl,
While I, a prisoner to one spot,
Languish and cannot move at all!

No sunbeam, not a ray of hope
  Reaches my cell to pierce the gloom;
I know that for the grave alone
  I shall exchange this hateful room.

Perhaps I have for long been dead,
  These fancies may be only ghosts
That whirl by night within my head,
  In rainbow-hued and airy hosts.

Yes, spectral forms they well may be,
  Of the divine old pagan sort,
And a dead poet's skull like mine
  Is just the place they'd choose for sport.

The orgies terrible and sweet,
  The revels of that spectral horde,
Often the poet's poor dead hand
  Strives on the morrow to record.

4.

Time was when many a flower gay
  Bloomed on my path, but, seated high
Upon my horse, I did not stay
  To lean and pluck them, passing by.

But now that, sick to death, I languish,
And dug already is my grave,
I think upon those flowers with anguish,
And for their slighted fragrance crave.

A pansy warm, of golden fire,
My burning brain can clear recall.
Wild thing! her beauty I desire,
Untasted then, the most of all.

My comfort is: the waters wan
Of Lethe still retain their might
To soothe the foolish heart of man
With their sweet, dark, oblivious night.

5.

I have laughed by day, I have laughed by night,
With maid and with man been jolly,
I've sometimes done wrong and sometimes right,
And right was the greater folly.

The maid was a mother before a wife—
Why all the lamenting after?
If you've never been foolish at all in your life,
Your wisdom's a thing for laughter.

6.

I saw them laugh and smile and weep;
I saw them droop towards the tomb;
And while they sighed and sank to sleep,
I gazed serenely on their doom.

When graveward then they bore the bier
I followed, mourning with the rest,
And on returning home, I fear,
I ate with undiminished zest.

Now on those faces dead so long
I think with sorrow and desire,
And on a sudden, fierce and strong,
Love fills my heart with surging fire.

But Julia's are the tears that flow,
And saddest in remembrance stay,
To frantic longing mounts my woe;
I call upon her night and day.

And often in my fevered dreams
I fancy I can feel her yearn,
Until the poor dead flower seems
To grant my love a late return.

O tender phantom, hold me fast;
And kiss me closer—with thy breath
Oh, ease and sweeten, at the last,
The dark and bitter hour of death!

7.

You were a blonde young lady, most refined,
Agreeable and good and coldly kind,
In vain I waited for your heart to glow,
And in impulsive rapture overflow

With ardour for ideals high and true,
Which prose and reason solemnly pooh-pooh,
But which the noble souls who know their worth,
Suffer and yearn, and bleed for upon earth.

Once by the Rhine, in days of summer weather,
Beneath the vineyards steep we walked together;
The sun was laughing, and around our feet
The petalled cups were pouring fragrance sweet.

The purple gillyflower and rose were yearning,
Their kisses red they blew us sweet and burning;
Life fair and perfect seemed to blossom forth,
Even in the marigold of meanest worth.

In your white satin gown, beside me there,
You walked unruffled, elegant and fair,
Just like a maiden limned by Netscher's art;
A glacier in your corset for a heart.

8.

'Tis true before the judgment-seat
Of reason you have been acquitted;
The verdict is: "No crime at all
By word or deed the child committed."

Yes, dumb and motionless you stood
And saw my heart devoured with flame;
You did not speak or stir the fire,
Yet I condemn you all the same.

And every night in dreams I hear
A voice accuse and blame you sore
For malice and for cold ill-will,
And lay my ruin at your door.

With proofs and evidence 'tis armed,
And documentary array;
But in the morning, with the dream,
The voice accusing melts away.

Deep in my heart, in some recess,
Both voice and legal deeds are lost.
That I am ruined—that alone—
I still remember to my cost.

9.

Your letter plumbed my dark abyss.
A lightning flash, it showed me plain
How deep and awful is my pain,
How deep and dark my sorrow is.

Even you have pity, who of old
Within the desert of my heart,
A silent statue stood apart,
Like marble fair, like marble cold.

O God! how wretched must I be
That even she should silence break,
That she should weep, and for my sake—
That even the stone should pity me!

My soul is shaken at the sight!
Have pity also, God, and end
This awful tragedy! Oh, send
The peace of Thy eternal night!

10.

That the real sphinx is woman
  By her figure is confessed;
There's the clawed, the lion body,
  And mere foolishness the rest.

And the real sphinx's riddle
  Is as dark as death. The son
And the husband of Jocasta
  'Twould have puzzled and undone.

Well that woman o'er this riddle—
  Even she—perplexed should stumble;
Were the answer known, the heavens
  And the earth would surely crumble.

11.

At the cross-roads women three
  Sit sighing and grinning,
  And plotting and spinning;
They're as old and as ugly as ugly can be.

The first one twines the thread,
  On the distaff turning
  And wetting it; burning
And dry are the lips of her loose mouth dread.

With the second the spindle flies
  And whirls without stay,
  In the drollest way.
Like taffeta red are the old thing's eyes.

The third of the Parcæ snips
  The thread—nose long,
  Shears sharp and strong,
And the Miserere upon her lips.

Oh, speed, ye Fates, and sever
  This thread of mine,
  Accursed, malign,
That the pain of life may pass for ever!

12.

I long not for the realms of air,
  The Paradisal fields of mirth;
No lovelier women can be there,
  Than I have known below on earth.

For angel with the daintiest wing
I should be loath my wife to lose;
Psalms on the clouds to sit and sing
Is not the pastime I would choose.

O Lord! I think it would be best
To let me in this world remain.
Some money's all that I request,
And bodily relief from pain.

The world is full of sin and wrong,
But I've got used to my abode—
Can comfortably jog along
This vale of tears; I know the road.

Besides, I very seldom roam,
So do not mind the strife and stir;
To sit beside my wife at home
In slippered ease I much prefer.

Leave me beside her! When I hear
Her tongue in merry chatter fly,
My soul drinks in the music dear,
So true and honest is her eye!

Yes, health, O Lord! and better pay
Is all I ask; and here below
To live for many a happy day
Beside my wife in *statu quo!*

13.

"May he perish from remembrance!"
'Twas old Esther Wolff I heard
Thus exclaim; the malediction
I recorded, word for word.

To be blotted out for ever
From the memory of man—
"May he perish from remembrance!"—
So this gem of curses ran.

Heart, my heart, pour out the torrent
Of thy wrong and anguish grim!
May he perish from remembrance!—
Wherefore, whisper not of *him*.

May he perish from remembrance:
Live in neither book nor verse!
Dog obscure, entombed in darkness,
Thou shalt rot beneath my curse!

On the Resurrection morning,
When the awful trump shall blow
Sounding fanfares, and, arising,
All the dead to judgment go,

And the chosen names the Angel
  Reads before the heavenly host,
May he perish from remembrance,
  And be numbered with the lost!

14.

Oh, love in the month of March began,
When I was a sad and an ailing man;
But May arrived with her green delight,
And put my sorrows all to flight.

It was one afternoon at three,
At the Hermitage, 'neath a linden tree,
On a mossy bench while hid apart,
That I showed you what was in my heart.

The flowers were fragrant at our feet,
The nightingales were singing sweet,
But not a note we heard them sing;
We talked of many a weighty thing.

We swore to love till life was done;
The hours flew on; 'twas set of sun;
And then, when forth the darkness crept,
We sat together still, and wept.

15.

My spirit binds you with a spell,
And all my thoughts are yours as well;
Your fancies have their source in me,
And from my soul you cannot flee.

My breath impassioned fans your face;
From you I have my dwelling-place,
And even asleep you cannot lie
Safe from my kiss and whisper sly.

My body's rotting in the ground,
My spirit lives, and it has found
A house, beloved, in your heart:
It plays the household kobold's part.

Grudge not the strange, uncanny thing
His cosy nest, for there he'd cling,
The little thief, although you ran
Hot-foot to China and Japan.

Where'er you fled, from Pole to Pole,
Within your heart would sit my soul—
My spirit binds you with a spell,
And all my thoughts are yours as well.

16.

Bid me be burnt with pincers hot,
  By cruel hands my face be flayed,
Flog me, but let me linger not
  In torment of a hope delayed.

Oh, break and twist my bones with pain;
  'Neath every torture let me languish;
But ask me not to wait in vain,
  For waiting is supremest anguish.

Till six I waited yesterday,
  The whole long weary afternoon;
But you, you never came my way;
  I thought I'd be a madman soon.

Impatience like a serpent wound
  And coiled about me; up I sprang
Each time I heard the door-bell sound,
  Then backward fell—some other rang.

You never came—I pant, I rave;
  And Satan whispers in my ear,
"The lotus flower that you crave,
  Is mocking you, old fool, I fear!"

17.

He who has a heart, and carries
  Love within it, meets the foe
Half defeated; so I'm conquered:
  Gagged and fettered and laid low—

When I die they'll cut my tongue out,
  Lest, though now I lose my breath,
I should rise again, still speaking,
  From the shadow-land of death.

When I'm dead and in my coffin
  I shall rot beneath the clay.
All the stupid wrongs I suffered
  Tongue of mine will ne'er betray.

18.

When I raise my fist to smite,
Filled with anger fierce by night,
Impotent my nerveless arm
Sinks again, too weak to harm.

I am dying crushed, forlorn;
My vendetta none hath sworn—
To take vengeance without ruth,
Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.

Ah!, my kinsmen were my bane,
By my kinsmen I am slain.
'Twas a bloody deed and vile,
Wrought by treachery and guile.

They contrived to lay me low,
Like good Siegfried long ago.
Kinsmen who 'gainst kinsmen plot,
Know the vulnerable spot.

19.

More diseased than tongue can tell
Is this earth on which we dwell.
All we prize the most and cherish,
All that's loveliest must perish.

Is it ancient dreams phantasmal
From the ground like mists miasmal
Rising, subtle, foul and still,
Which the air with poison fill?

Gracious women flower-sweet,
Scarce unfolded to the heat
Of the kisses of the sun,
Death has ravished one by one.

Heroes, proudly riding by,
From the ambushed arrow die,
And malignant toads unclean
Quickly slaver laurels green.

That which yesterday shone bright
Rots to-day, concealed from sight.
And poor Genius in his ire
Breaks in twain his golden lyre.

Oh, what wisdom has the star,
In the heavens safe and far;
So remote from ills of earth,
In the region of her birth!

Wise the stars who will not leave
Life and heavenly calm, to grieve
Upon earth with us below,
Sharing misery and woe;

Who refuse with us to dwell
Mid the foul and putrid smell
Of the dung where worms unclean
Crawl malodorous, obscene;

Who are happy where they are,
From our hateful tumult far:
From this struggle late and early,
And the ceaseless hurly-burly.

From their high and heavenly places
They look down with wistful faces
On this world of sorrow drear,
And they drop a golden tear.

20.

My days and nights were merry all the year,
And, when I used to strike my poet's lyre,
My folk rejoiced. My song was bliss and fire,
And fanned full many a lovely flame more clear.
Still blooms my summer, but with autumn's cheer
My barns are filled, and all that men require
I have—and now I must forsake my heart's desire,
And leave what makes the world so kind and dear!

The chords slip from my feeble hand; the glass
Breaks into atoms, which with heart aglow
A moment since to merry lips I prest.
O God! how bitter 'tis to die, to pass!
O God! how sweet it is to live below
Here, in the old, familiar earthly nest!

21.

Within the hour-glass I can see
The dwindling sands run low.
My sweet, my angel wife, from thee
Death tears me; I must go.

He tears me from thy arm, sweetheart,
No longer can I fight,
My soul must from my body part,
She dies from sheer affright.

In the old house where she would be
Death will not let her live;
She trembles, "Whither?"—like a flea
Imprisoned in a sieve.

I cannot change by tears or strife
What Fate has fixed for ever,
And soul and body, man and wife,
When strikes the hour, must sever.

22.

Matilda plucked a posy gay;
With pleading hand I waved away
Her smile, her flowers,—I shudder so
When I behold sweet flowers ablow.

They speak so plain the thought I shun:
Fair life and I no more are one.
In the dark land that waits for me
My poor unburied corpse should be.

When flowers I smell I fall aweeping;
Of all this world has in its keeping—
Love, beauty, sun and laughter fain—
The tears alone to me remain.

I used to sit and watch entranced
The rats that in the opera danced;
And now I hear the horrid shuffling
Of rats and moles in churchyards scuffling.

O fragrant flowers! to my sight
Ye bring a chorus, ballet bright,
Of perfumed memories old and sweet—
Lo! up they spring with dancing feet,

In short and fluttering skirts come flashing,
With castanets and cymbals clashing;
But all the laughter, dallying, wooing
But shows the darker my undoing.

Hence with the flowers! I cannot bear
The scents that mind of days so fair;
Those pranks and revels long ago—
To think on them's to weep for woe.—

23.

I was ordained, O lamb, to be
A shepherd and a shield to thee.
I gave thee of my bread to eat,
With water from the fountain sweet.
When cold and loud the winter storm,
Upon my bosom thou wert warm;
In my embrace I held thee fast.
When chill and fierce the winter blast,
When wolf and torrent, rivals dread,
Howled in their dark and rocky bed,
Thou didst not shake or start affrighted.
Even when the blazing levin blighted
The tallest pine—upon my breast
In sleep untroubled thou didst rest.

My arm is feebler than of old;
Pale Death draws nigh. From sheep and fold
And pastoral things I must away.
O God, within Thy hands I lay
The staff Thou gavest.—Do Thou keep
My lamb when I am laid asleep
Beneath the grass—preserve untorn
Her flesh from every wounding thorn.
Oh, guard her fleece from briars keen,
And bogs defiling and unclean;

Spread everywhere before her feet
The greenest pasture springing sweet;
And free from sorrow may she rest
As once she slumbered on my breast.

24.

I do not envy Fortune's sons
  Their life—I envy sore
The swift and painless ease with which
  They pass and are no more.

In splendid raiment, laugh on lip,
  And on their head a crown,
While seated at the board of life
  The sickle mows them down.

In festal garb, with roses decked
  That had not time to fade,
These favourites of Fortune fall,
  And reach the realms of shade.

Dead men of gallant mien are they,
  Unwasted by decline.
To court they're bidden welcome by
  Tzaritza Proserpine.

I envy them their happy lot!
For seven years have I
In anguish tossed upon the ground,
And yet I cannot die!

O God! cut short this torment vile,
And let me buried be;
I have no gift for martyrdom,
As Thou must surely see.

At Thy inconsequence, O Lord!
Forgive me if I wonder;
To sour a poet born so glad—
It surely is a blunder.

This pain has dulled my mirth of soul,
Grief makes in me her home;
And if the sorry jest goes on,
I'll join the Church of Rome.

And then like other saints I'll whine,
And din Thee to Thy cost—
And so the best of humorists,
To letters will be lost.

25.

In my brain there's a glimmering, surging flood;
Woods, meadows, and hills roll past.
But now there emerges something plain:
One picture is clear at last.

I imagine the place is Godesberg town
That in fancy I seem to see.
I sit outside the old-world inn,
In the shade of the linden tree.

My throat is as dry as if, at a draught,
I had swallowed the setting sun.
Mine host! mine host! a bottle of wine,
And drawn from your mellowest tun!

And down to my soul the juice of the grape
Flows kindly and warm and sweet,
And quenched, for a season, within my throat
Is the flame of the sunset heat.

Come, one bottle more! I drank the first
In a dull, undevotional mood,
And with wandering thoughts. O noble wine,
Forgive my manners rude!

I was gazing aloft at the Drachenfels,
Whose castle ruins shine
So romantic and fair in the sunset glow
Thus mirrored in the Rhine.

I was listening, too, to the vintagers' song,
And that saucy finch who chatters;
I drank the wine with roving thoughts,
And while musing on other matters.

But now I will stick my nose in the glass;
One train of thought I'll follow;
I'll gaze at the wine, then shut my eyes,
And devoutly swallow, swallow.

But how odd! While drinking I seem to see
A sight by which I'm troubled.
Another poor toper drinks as well,
From one to two I'm doubled.

And the second man is so ailing and sick,
So wasted and pale his look!
His mocking gaze is so fixed and sad:
I find it hard to brook.

And the fellow asserts we are one and the same,
Maintains he is no deceiver,
And that he and I are a single man,
And are, both of us, sick with fever,

And that neither is sitting in Godesberg town—
That in Paris our limbs we stretch
On a sick-bed, weary and ill and sad.
You lie, you pale-faced wretch!

You lie! I'm as red as a rose in bloom,
I am hale and free from languor.
My arm is strong—you had better beware—
Provoke me not to anger!

He shrugs his shoulders, and sighs, "Poor fool!"
And my patience gives way at last.
With my cursed second self I fight;
The blows fall thick and fast.

And yet while the fellow I'm beating thus—
'Tis a curious thing!—with each thump
My body appears to feel the blow
And ache with another lump.

And while I've been fighting and pummelling hard
My throat has again grown dry;
But when I would call for more wine, the words,
They stick in my throat and die.

My senses reel, and I hear them talk
Of plasters and medicines sour—
In a tablespoon the dose to be given,
Twelve drops of it every hour.

26.

When the fat leech has sucked his fill,
One shakes him off without ado;
One drops some salt upon his back—
But how to rid myself of you?

My patron, friend, my faithful leech,
What salt for you ought one to try?
You've sucked the marrow from my spine:
Your loving lips have sucked it dry.

And now my body's grown so thin:
A skeleton, and lean at that!
But you've attained a noble size;
Your cheeks are red, your belly's fat.

Oh send me, God, some bandit brave,
Who'll slay me with a single blow,
Anything rather than this leech—
How shake him off—he sucks so slow!

27.

At home on German ground
The trees of life abound;
But, though the cherries tempt our touch,
We dread the scarecrows overmuch.

Ours is the sparrows' case,
If a bogey but grimace;
When cherries laugh and would entice
We sing a song of sacrifice!

Oh, red without the cherries flame,
But death's the kernel all the same.
Above in the stars alone
Grow cherries without stone.

O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Whom we adore and honour most.
The German soul's endeavour
Is after God for ever!

Only where angels fly
Grows joy that shall not die;
Here all is sin and sore distress,
And cherries sour and bitterness.

28.

From love's sweet goblet I have quaffed,
I've drained it to my heart's desire.
A burning and consuming fire—
A whisky punch—I found the draught.

Oh, friendship's gentle warmth for me!—
That soothes the soul in every woe,
And quickens with its harmless glow,
Like a refreshing cup of tea.

29.

When the wild fires of love no longer dwell
Within our hearts, where burns the vanished flame?
In the accursèd region whence it came,
Down where the damned for ever roast in hell.

30.

The end is near beyond a doubt,
The fires of love are burning out.
When free from love at last we win,
The better days for us begin—
Cool domesticity's delight.
This world, that money makes so bright,
We can enjoy and prize aright.
In comfort we digest our food;
A sleepless head in solitude
No longer toss, but slumber warm
Within a faithful wedded arm.

31.

To forsake a hen so plump—
  Oh, you wicked, wanton man!—
For a lean and haggard frump,
  For a skinny Mary Ann!

To be drawn by flesh alluring
  Is a weakness one condones;
'Tis a crime beyond enduring
  To go wooing after bones!

So the Devil still gets at one,
  So our senses are misled!
We forsake the comely fat one,
  And we choose the lean instead!

32.

I fashion little songs,
  Belovëd of my heart,
And they spread their sounding wings,
  And fly to where thou art.

They are thy husband's children,
  The offspring of his tongue;
O'er field and wood and valley
  They speed to thee when sung.

My songs that choir together
The world so gladly hears
But, were they wailing children,
The world would stop its ears.

* * *

33.

Do not fancy 'tis from dulness
That your devilries I bear;
Nor suppose me God Almighty,
Used to pardon and to spare.

I have borne your pranks and whimsies
Uncomplainingly, I know.
Other folk, in my position,
Would have killed you long ago.

Heavy cross! And yet I drag it,
Always patient I will prove—
Woman, know I'm doing penance
For my sins, in that I love.

You're my furnace purgatorial;
From your cruel arms I'll win,
By the grace of God Almighty,
Free and purified from sin.

34.

No maiden have I e'er misled
By tender words and flattering speech;
And, if I knew a woman wed,
I counted her beyond my reach.

Were it not so, this name of mine
Would not deserve, forever writ
In honour's book, to blaze and shine,
And in my face all men might spit.

35.

Eternity, how long art thou!
Years, a thousand, sooner pass.
For a thousand years I've roasted,
And am not yet cooked, alas!

Thou art long, Eternity!
Years a thousand sooner stop.
In the end will come the Devil,
And devour me neck and crop.

36.

Days and hours unending, slow,
Crawl along and never go;
With their horns protruding, trail—
Each a grey, gigantic snail.

Often in the misty sea,
In the void eternity,
Shines a beacon fair and bright,
Like my darling's eyes of light.

But the bliss—can it have shone?—
Gleams a moment and is gone.
And the only thing I know
Is my leaden weight of woe.

37.

* * *

38.

I've played the gambler's reckless part;
Upon a whim I staked my life;
And now I've lost, with luck at strife,
Thou canst not well complain, my heart.

"The will of man," the Saxons say,
"His kingdom is"—My life I've given,
And won the thing for which I've striven.
My heart, at least, has had its way.

The happiness I bought so dearly
A moment tarried and took flight;
But they who've drunken of delight,
Compute not time by minutes merely.

True bliss contains eternity.
For all the flames of love, that yearn,
In one great fire together burn,
And Time and Space have ceased to be.

39.

Tamed is mediæval rudeness
By the advent of the fine arts:
Chief 'mongst instruments of culture
In our time is the piano.

And on family life the railway
Has a wholesome influence also,
Minimising much the pain of
Separation from one's kindred.

I regret that the consumption
Of my spinal cord prevents me
From continuing my sojourn
In a world so full of progress.

40.

A demon in an evil hour
Placed in your hand the dagger that you bore.
I know not who the demon was;
I know the wound was poisoned, and no more.

Oft in the silent night I wish
That from the realm of shades you would arise
And solve the riddle once for all,
Approving yourself guiltless in mine eyes.

I wait for you—make haste! If not,
I will descend to hell, and, without ruth,
In front of Satan and his fiends,
Will call you to account, and learn the truth.

I come—like Orpheus long ago,
The underworld and all its horrors dare.
Though in hell's deepest pool you cower,
Be sure that I will seek and find you there.

Now I am in the realm of dread,
Where the lost wring their hands and gnash their teeth.
Lo! I tear off your purple rags
Of vaunted goodness—see your soul beneath—

What I desired to know I know,
And gladly I forgive my murderer base,
But cannot, even if I would,
Prevent the fiends from spitting in your face.

41.

With their false lips they kissed me, and they drank,
And pledged me in the juice of the sweet vine;
But they had mingled poison with the wine—
For this I have my kith and kin to thank.
My flesh consumes from off my bones, and lank
And lean upon my sick-bed now I pine.
By fraud they stole the youth that once was mine—
For this I have my kith and kin to thank.

I am a Christian—the church register
Proclaims me such—wherefore, ere I depart
I will forgive you in a Christian way.
It is not easy; I should much prefer
To curse you from the bottom of my heart:
May God Almighty damn your souls for aye!

42.

Now death draws near, and what unknown,
Pride counselled, should for ever be,
I will declare: for thee, for thee,
My heart has beat for thee alone.

My coffin's made, and to my bed
They lower me, that I may sleep.
But thou, Maria, thou wilt weep,
And think on me when I am dead.

Thy pretty hands thou'lt even wring.
Oh, grieve not—'tis the human lot:—
At last defiled in death must rot
Each good and great and lovely thing.

HALLELUJAH.

Sun, moon, and stars on heaven's height
Bear witness to Jehovah's might,
And, when above the righteous gaze,
They sing to the Creator's praise.

I have no need to look so high,
For on the earth, at hand, there lie
Full many works with wonder fraught,
That, here below, the Lord hath wrought.

Yea, worthy folk, I humbly turn
My gaze to earth, and there discern
The gem of God's creative art,
His masterpiece: the human heart.

The sun in all his glory bright,
The moon that shines so soft at night,
The gleaming stars, the splendour dire
Of comets with their tails of fire—

They suffer, one and all, eclipse,
And, like so many farthing dips,
Before the heart grow pale and wan
That flames within the breast of man.

The world in miniature it holds,
The woods, the meadows, and the wolds,
The wilds which savage beasts infest,
Such as the heart too oft molest.

Here rivers rush and torrents leap,
Here yawn the precipices deep,
Midst gardens gay, and fields whose grass
Now feeds the lamb, and now the ass.

Here fountains of pure water spring,
And nightingales complaining sing:
To please the lovely roses pine,
Until they die of a decline.

Nor is there any lack of change,
So ample is the weather's range—
To-day, the land by sunshine kist,
To-morrow, grey with autumn mist.

The flowers drop their petals sweet;
The stormy winds tempestuous beat;
At last the snow begins to fall,
And streams and lakes are frozen all.

Now is the time for wintry sport;
The feelings to their masks resort:
In drunken folly dance along,
Among the masquerading throng.

'Tis true, amid those pleasures vain
There mingles oft a secret pain;
'Mid masquerade and music gay,
They sigh for bliss that's passed away.

A sudden crack.—Nay, start not so!
It is the ice that breaks below.
The crust gives way, which, smooth and chill,
Had bound our hearts so long for ill.

Lo! what was cold and sad is gone;
And Spring—ah, joy!—returns anon:
The season fair of all delight
Love's magic wand awakens bright!—

Great is the glory of the Lord,
In heaven, on earth, alike adored.
Loud songs of praise to heaven's King,
And hallelujahs I will sing.

Man's heart He formed so fair and sweet,
And then to make His work complete
He breathed therein from heaven above,
His breath divine, whose name is love.

Hence with the lyre of ancient Greece,
And let the wanton muses cease
Their dances lewd! In worthier ways
I'll sing to the Creator's praise.

No pagan music shall be mine;
But David's pious harp divine
With strings melodious shall prolong
The hallelujahs of my song!

THE ASCENSION.

Upon the bier the body lay;
Torn from earth's tumult and dismay,
The soul was far upon the road
That leads to heaven's glad abode.

It knocks upon the portal high,
And says, with many a heavy sigh,
"St. Peter, come; undo the door!
Oh, life was wearisome and sore.
On silken pillows I would rest,
And play with little angels blest
At blindman's-buff, and, sorrow past,
Enjoy delight and peace at last!"

There sounds a jingling bunch of keys,
The shuffling step of slipshod ease;
And at a window by the gate
St. Peter shortly shows his pate.

"Hottentots, idlers, gipsies, Poles,
Now one by one, and now in shoals,
And ragged beggars, human scum,
Vagabonds all—they come, they come:
Would enter heaven with the best,
And live in joy as angels blest.
Begone! begone! For such gallows-faces,
'Tis evident that heaven no place is;
The heavenly halls are not for you,
The Devil claims you as his due.
Off!—In the darksome pit to dwell,
The pit of everlasting hell!"—

So growls the old man for a minute,
And then—for there is nothing in it—

He says good-naturedly, "Poor soul,
I hardly think, upon the whole,
You are a rascal of that kind;
You may come in, I don't much mind.
To-day's my birthday—reason good
For being in a melting mood.
Your town and country tell me first,
And if you're married;—for the worst
And deepest dyed of human sins
Through wedded sorrow pardon wins;
A married man need roast no more,
And enters straight through heaven's door."

"I am from Prussia," says the soul.
"Berlin's my town, where gently roll
The Spree's fair waters—after rain—
A charming place, as some maintain.
I lectured privately; at college
I read philosophy, sought knowledge—
I took a canoness to wife,
Who, always somewhat given to strife,
Was worst when there was lack of bread.
'Twas that that killed me; now I'm dead."

"Oh, woe is me!" St. Peter said,
"Philosophy's a wretched trade.
I've always marvelled, I admit,
That any one should study it.

It's godless, dreary, does not pay—
Unprofitable every way.
In doubt and hunger life is passed,
And Satan has the soul at last.
Your own Xantippe railed enough
At the watery soup—unwholesome stuff!—
With never a single eye of fat
To smile and cheer her spirits flat.—
But never mind; take heart of grace!
Though I have orders strict to chase
From heaven's door with whip and gibe
The whole philosophising tribe,
And more especially, indeed,
The irreligious German breed—
To-day's my birthday, as I said;
I will not drive you off—instead
I will at once unlock the gate.
Come, enter without more debate.
Quick!—
There! you're safe and sound inside!
From early morn till eventide
You now may wander, quite at home,
Through heaven; you may dream and roam
About the jewel-paven streets.
But no philosophy! All feats
Of reason here were ill-advised;
Besides, I should be compromised.
And, when the angels sing, be sure
Your face expresses rapture pure.

If an archangel sings—mark this!—
Be still more overcome by bliss.
Say his soprano sounds so sweetly
That Malibran's eclipsed completely.
Both Cherubim and Seraphim
Should be admired, too, when they hymn.
Compare them to the great Rubini,
To Mario and Tamburini.
Give them their titles with complaisance,
And never grudge them an obeisance;
For singers, both in heaven and earth,
Like to be praised beyond their worth.
The Choir-conductor of the spheres—
Even He—with satisfaction hears
The works that He has wrought applauded,
And God the Lord with fervour lauded.
He loves to hear His praises rise
In psalms and incense to the skies.

"Remember me. And when the glory
Of heaven has grown a tedious story,
Come here. We'll play at cards, and drink.
I know more games than you would think,
From Faro down to Lasquenet.
And, by-the-bye, ere I forget—
If God should ask you whence you come,
About Berlin I would be dumb.
'Vienna,' 'Munich,' answer boldly,
But not 'Berlin'—it's looked on coldly."

THE AFFINITIES.

You weep, and gaze at me, believing
'Tis for my sorrow you are grieving.
Be not deceived, O woman! know
'Tis for yourself your tears o'erflow.

Did no foreboding ever steal
Across your spirit, and reveal
That the eternal will of Fate
Had formed us, each for each, as mate?—
Happy together and as one,
But, parted, ruined and undone.

In the great Book 'twas writ that we,
While life endured, should lovers be.
My bosom was the place for you;
There you had waked to knowledge new.
From the plant kingdom, with a kiss,
I would have drawn you up to bliss,
To higher life: to me, your goal;
I would have given you a soul.

Now that the riddle's solved at last,
The dwindling sands are fleeting fast.

It was ordained. Why weep and moan?
I go, and you must fade alone,
Before you bloom your blossom's shed,
The fire, before it burned, is dead.
Death holds you, and you cannot fly;
You, who have never lived, must die.

'Tis you I love. My God! I know
The truth at last. What bitter woe
When, at the moment heart finds heart,
The hour has struck for them to part!
When welcome is farewell! To-day
We go asunder, and for aye.
Nor will there any meeting be
In heaven above for you and me.
Beauty beneath the ground shall rot;
You'll moulder in the clay forgot.
But with the poets 'tis not thus;
Death cannot wreak his will on us.
Safe from annihilation's wrong,
Still in the faëry land of song,
In Avalon our spirits dwell—
Sweet corpse, for evermore farewell!

FOR THE MOUCHE.

It was a summer night of which I dreamed,
And mouldering remains of ancient glory;
Stonework of a Renaissance fabric gleamed
Around me in the moonlight, wan and hoary.

And here and there, from out the ruinous sward,
A pillar with grave, Doric capital
Arose and gazed defiant heavenward,
As challenging the thunderbolts to fall;

Everywhere crumbling fragments, strewn, confounded,
Sculptures and portals, many a curious gable,
Centaur and sphinx, of man and beast compounded,
Satyrs, chimæras—figures of old fable.

Among the *débris* was a marble tomb,
Wide open, still intact and undefiled,
And in the coffin, brave in manhood's bloom,
A dead man lying; sad his face and mild.

With necks upreaching, Caryatides
Seemed to support him with much toil and strain;
And carven on both sides I could, with ease,
Figures in bas-relief decipher plain.

Here was portrayed Olympus in its glory,
The Pagan gods, still unashamed and glad;
Adam and Eve from out the Bible story,
Each in the fig-leaf apron chastely clad.

And here was burning Troy—in classic poses,
Paris and Helen, and bold Hector too;
Haman and Esther, Aaron and great Moses;
Judith, and Holofernes whom she slew.

And yonder, lo! the God of Love divine;
Phœbus Apollo, Vulcan and Dame Venus,
Mercury, Pluto and his Proserpine,
God Bacchus, and Priapus and Silenus.

Beside them stood the ass of Balaam wise—
For speech an ass was surely chosen well;
And Abraham, prepared for sacrifice,
And Lot, who with his daughters drank and fell.

I saw Herodias dancing, and the head
Of John the Baptist, which the charger bore;
And hell with all the fiends, and Satan dread,
And Peter with the keys of heaven's door.

Again the subject changed; on stone was drawn
Lascivious Jove's outrageous crimes of old,
When he pursued poor Leda as a swan,
And Danäe as a shower of ducats gold.

I also saw Diana's headlong chase,
With dogs, and following nymphs up-girdled high;
And Hercules in woman's garb and place—
Distaff 'neath arm, he made the spindle fly;

And, close to Hercules, Mount Sinai rising,
And Israel with his oxen on the height;
And, in the Temple, Christ, the child, surprising
The Pharisees, and arguing aright.

So, in a contrast glaring and grotesque,
Judea's Godward yearning was combined
With the Greek sense of joy! Its arabesque
The clinging ivy about both had twined.

But strange! While of those sculptures thus I dreamed,
A curious fancy stole into my head,
And on a sudden to myself I seemed
The man within the marble lying dead.

And at the far end of the bier there grew
A flower of a rare, mysterious form,
The petals sulphur-gold and violet-blue;
The flower breathed of love's resistless charm.

The name we give it is the passion-flower;
On Golgotha it blossomed from the sod,
When flowed the blood of world-redeeming power,
What time they crucified the Son of God.

And it bears witness to the blood they shed;
All instruments of torture which the malice
Of the vile murderers employed, 'tis said,
Are counterfeited plainly on its chalice.

Yes, all the Passion-requisites, 'tis urged,
The torture-chamber quite complete is here:
The crown of thorns, the ropes that bound and scourged,
Nails, hammer, cup and cross, depicted clear.

Such was the flower by my grave that grew,
And, o'er my lifeless body bending low
As mourning women in their sorrow do,
Eyes, brow, and hand it kissed in silent woe.

But magic of a dream, how strange and fleet!
The sulphur-yellow passion-flower moved,
And grew into a woman's likeness sweet,
And it is she herself, the best beloved!

Yes, dearest child; thyself, thou art the flower;
I recognise thee by thy kisses yearning.
No flower-lips could have such tender power,
No flower-tears could ever be so burning.

Mine eyes were closed and dead, and yet how plain
My soul could see, and feast upon thy face;
And thou did'st look on me enraptured, fain,
Touched by the moonlight with a ghostly grace.

My heart, although we spoke not, could behold
The thoughts unuttered in thy spirit move.
The spoken word is shameless, overbold;
Oh, silence is the modest flower of love!

A soundless dialogue! One scarce would deem
How, by the dumb and tender talk, time fled.
Swift was the summer night of lovely dream,
Woven of dear delight and shuddering dread.

But what we talked of bid me not betray.
What does the glowworm glimmer to the grass?
What does the brooklet murmur on its way?
What sigh the west winds, grieving as they pass?

Ask the carbuncle why it shines; discover
What rose and rocket by their scent betoken;
Ask not the passion-flower and her dead lover
What 'neath the moon was said, although unspoken.

I know not for how long, all sorrow banished,
Within my cool and slumbrous marble chest
I dreamed of joy. But ah, too quickly vanished
The rapture of my calm, untroubled rest!

Thou only givest bliss without annoy,
O death, within the silent grave; this life,
Foolish and vulgar, gives unquiet joy,
And passion always warring and at strife.

Ah, woe is me! A tumult rose without,
And chased the calm and happiness away.
I heard them arguing with stamp and shout,
My gentle flower was seized with sore dismay.

Yes, from without, alas! we were surprised
By sounds of hate—assertion and dissent;
And, from their voices, soon I recognised
The bas-reliefs about my monument.

Does the old superstition haunt my bier,
And are the marble phantoms still debating?
Is sylvan Pan, with his loud cry of fear,
The anathemas of Moses emulating?

Oh, well I know they never will agree;
Beauty and truth will always be at variance.
The army of mankind will always be
Split in two camps: the Helens and Barbarians.

Denunciations, insults, and alas!
No sign at all of burying the hatchet;
While loud above the din brayed Balaam's ass—
The voice of neither god nor saint could match it!

Hee-ha! it went, both in and out of season—
That hideous sound, half hiccough and half choke;
I think that I should soon have lost my reason,
But in despair I cried aloud—and woke.

THE LOTUS-FLOWER.

(TO THE MOUCHE.)

INDEED we're as queer a couple
As anyone surely could name,
For weak on her legs is the loved one,
And the lover's completely lame.

No dog could be sicker than he is,
And a suffering cat is she;
I rather fancy that neither
Quite right in the head can be.

Poor thing! she's got hold of the notion
She's a lotus-flower in love;
And he, the poor pale fellow,
He thinks he's the moon above.

The lotus-flower in the moonlight
May unfold and yearn and long;
Instead of life, the renewer,
She can only receive a song.

WHERE?

WHERE shall I, who wander weary,
Find the rest for which I pine?
Under palms mid deserts dreary?
Under lindens by the Rhine?

In some wilderness will strangers
Dig my grave with callous hand?
Shall I rest at last from dangers
By a sea, beneath the sand?

'Tis no matter! For God's heaven
Will be round me, there as here,
And the stars that swing at even,
Will be lamps above my bier.

EPILOGUE.

THAT our grave is warmed by glory—
Stuff and nonsense! 'Tis a story!
Better warmth than that's imparted
By a milkmaid loving-hearted,

Kissing full-lipped and afire,
Though she reeks of dung and byre.
Why, a better, truer heat
Comes of drinking brandy neat:
Comes of drinking punch and swallowing
All the grog you can, and wallowing
In the dens of vilest stamp,
Filled with every sort of scamp
That has dodged the gallows-tree,
But who's living, breathing free,
And who tastes of more that sweet is
Than the famous son of Thetis.—
Yes, Pelides spoke the truth:
"It is better, in good sooth,
On the earth to live a slave
Than to rule on Styx's wave,
Mid the shadows first in glory,
Even though Homer sing your story."

THE DYING MAN.

WITHIN my breast desire is done
For vain delight beneath the sun.
I hate no longer what is bad:
Hate too is dead. I am not sad
For others' sorrow or my own—
'Tis death that lives in me alone.

The curtain falls upon the play
And, yawning on its homeward way,
My worthy German public hies.
The honest folk are very wise,
They're dining now in ease and pleasure,
They sing and laugh and drink their measure.

'Twas truth the noble hero told
Who spoke in Homer's book of old:
The Philistine of least renown
Alive to-day in Stukkert town
Beside the Neckar—ah, he still is
More blest than I, the great Achilles,
Dead hero who, the king of ghosts,
In Hades rule my shadowy hosts.

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